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WAS CHRIST A GOD?

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Conclusions drawn from Apostolic Writings.

By F. MENSINGA.

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NEW YORK :
Published by F. MENSINGA,
1880.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

In directing attention to the theories advanced herein, and asking for them an impartial judgment, I think it well to state as briefly as may be, what led to the production of the book; such a starting point, in my opinion, being in a manner necessary to a full understanding of its motive.

In the first place it originated from no desire of criticising the Scriptures only. An earnest religious spirit has from earliest childhood inspired me with sincere reverence and love for the Bible, and it is this which has led me to make of it so complete a study. I believed it to be the Word of God, and with a view to making its tangled contents clear to my mind, gave every part of it calm and impartial consideration. This eventually exposed to me its many inconsistencies, and finally, after long suffering, brought me to my present conviction.

The desire of understanding the Scriptures clearly, I owe, in the first place, to my father, a minister of the Gospel who, in accordance with the doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Remonstrant Church to which he belongs, always advocated liberty of thought in all religious matters. He held that it could

not be wrong to ponder such religious questions as were not clear to our minds, and that we should not place confidence even in the Bible if its statements failed to harmonize with our own judgment; that our minds were bestowed upon us to use in any proper way, and that not to think is to neglect a duty. On this account I felt justified in criticising even the Scriptures, where I discovered a statement therein that to me was not in conformity with justice and reason.

My motive in publishing the results of such criticism and investigation is to contribute my mite to the present gigantic strife for progress, development and knowledge which in our age is manifest in everything except religion. Even in this the fires of a general revolution are being silently ignited, and our present intelligence has become conscious of the frivolous nature of the theories that satisfied our fathers, and is no longer willing unconditionally to accept the mysterious and inconsistent fables as the voice of Him who created all things. To trample upon these old traditions, however, which millions have for centuries leant upon as their only salvation, few care to attempt even though thoroughly satisfied as to their unreliable character; but human progress and intelligence advances with irresistible force, and before many years, as many recent events plainly predict, the old Christian dogmas may experience enormous transformations.

Now at this point a few words as to my religious education and experiences may be of interest. I was born in a small village called Sybecarspel, in Nordholland, and was the third child of a large family, upon which the kindest care was bestowed by modest, frugal and religious parents. When I was still young, my father was induced to leave this little place, by a call to a ministry in Germany, where better facilities were afforded for educating his large family. The

change in circumstances and habits had but little influence on the sincere religious foundation imparted to me in my childhood.

I remember that when I was about fourteen years of age, we children were all gathered about the sick-bed of our mother, expecting that every moment she would breathe her last. After a time I felt unable to contain my grief, and rushed from her presence. In my own room I knelt down and prayed fervently, in my childish way, for my dear mother's recovery, and for my small brothers and sisters, who, but for her recovery, would be left motherless. When I arose I felt convinced that my prayer had been heard, and its request granted. In more cheerful spirit I returned to the sick chamber, where, strange to say, a reaction in my parent's condition had really taken place, and from this time she rapidly recovered. This and other incidents in which I thought that I recognized God's special care, made me feel as if I was His favorite; so deep was my religious conviction even at that early age.

Soon after this it was decided that my future should be devoted to mercantile pursuits, and I entered as an apprentice in one of the larger cities of Germany. The Germans, in general, are not a religious people, and I was subjected to much ridicule on account of my pious observances and conduct. The frivolous spirit by which I was surrounded, did not fail to affect my youthful mind, and before long I also became imbued with the prevailing scepticism, so much so, that in the course of a few years, little or nothing was left of my early piety.

It then happened that I accepted a situation as traveller for a large house in Norway. The responsibility of my position at once led me to be more thoughtful. During my first journey through this picturesque country, with its alternate grand and lovely pastoral scenery, I was moved again with a spirit of

reverence for the Creator of such magnificence. My only companion was a gentleman holding a similar commercial position, but who, as it happened, was very religious. Through his conversation I was led back to my childish trust in God, and I followed his example of reading the Scriptures every morning and evening. I also became a member of the Christian Church, missed no prayer meeting or Sabbath service that I could possibly attend, and felt extreme delight in the lofty religious spirit which possessed me.

I was then inspired with the idea that the simple life of a merchant was no sufficient recompense for the salvation of my soul. I felt that I ought to save others from the eternal damnation I had so narrowly escaped. I even fancied that I was predestined for a higher mission, and that my past career had only been cast into such a groove for the purpose of acquainting me with the world, that I might the better be able to struggle with it for Christ's sake. I ought, it seemed to me, to devote my abilities entirely to benefitting my *fellows*, and, if necessary, to sacrifice my life in their behalf, as Jesus Christ had done. I concluded to become a missionary to the heathen, and prepared a letter to my parents in which I informed them of my determination. I hesitated to forward this letter, however, as I was not sure that I could administer such a responsible charge. I intended only a postponement, until I knew more of the Word of God and the teachings of Christ. There was no doubt in my mind that I had been selected for this high mission of carrying the news of salvation to the heathen. I saw visions, and had heavenly dreams, and even fancied that I was gifted with supernatural powers.

As an example of my complete faith at this time, I may mention an incident that occurred during one of my journeys. I was crossing a treacherous bay on the Norwegian coast, in company with the religious friend before mentioned, and a

few others. A heavy storm was raging, from which the high mountains, to some extent, protected us; but as we approached the mouth of the bay, enormous waves came dashing upon our boat, and we were in imminent danger of being swamped or dashed upon the rocks. The whole of the passengers were affrighted, and I, only, remained undisturbed. I imagined it to be merely a trial sent to me by God, and calmly comforted my companions, saying, "Be cheerful, friends, we will not perish." We passed the dangerous spot, and with difficulty arrived at our destination.

This incident, slight though it may appear, strengthened my belief still more, and I continued zealously to study my Bible. The more I studied it, however, the more I became unsettled. The conflicting accounts did not trouble me so much, because I took into consideration that they were written by different people, who might have differed simply in their view of the circumstances, and, after a lapse of years, reported only what they remembered of them. My most serious perplexity was in regard to the teachings and dogmas attributed to Christ, which would not agree with my conception of an all wise, infallible and just God—the God as I had imagined Him, as I loved Him.

QUESTIONABLE DOGMAS.

A few of these dogmas which occasioned me great perplexity I will here state. The principal one attributed to Christ is that He descended from heaven that the world might be saved. John, Chap. iii. verse 17. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Consequently we must consider the world as, up to that time, having been lost or condemned, and this is confirmed by the following passage, John, Chap. iii. verse 18. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." This doctrine is said to mean that up to the appearance of Christ the human race could be saved without His mediation, but since His appearance, and after the opportunity given of recognizing and believing on Him, everyone was "condemned already" that did not accept His representations. But as we know that it took considerable time and trouble to make converts even at those places where He taught, how could we expect that all mankind should know about Him at the same moment, and derive this promised benefit from His appearance? We must take into consideration that in accordance with the doctrine of an all-just and infallible God, the whole human race have an equal claim to His mercy, as they are all His creatures, and are all, it is said, His equally-beloved children. How then does this agree with the very limited opportunity which was given of availing themselves of His

mercy by the coming of Jesus Christ? This objection could be explained away, however, on the theory that all to whom this opportunity was not directly given, should have the same chance of being saved as they had before Christ's coming; or that they might believe on Him after His death and be saved as a consequence. But what object could there have been in the appearance of Christ if the great majority of mankind could be saved without His active mediation?

This question becomes still more complicated when we consider the position of the Jews, to whom Christ was specially sent, for they already possessed divine promises of Heaven, if they obeyed the laws laid down by Moses. If they did obey these laws given by God to Moses, the Almighty could have no fault to find with them, and what need, therefore, to send a divine mediator to them?

As to the heathen, they could not know of Christ's coming, and how, therefore, could they be expected to desert their own gods for Him, who was to them a stranger. They, according to the divine dogmas we are now discussing, would be mercilessly condemned. Fortunately for themselves, perhaps, they knew nothing of such partisan doctrine.

But we cannot believe that God should be so partial in His conduct as to make a special contract with the Jews. We cannot believe that He favored them above the people of all other creeds, when, according to the Old Testament, He could just as easily have saved all His creatures. Much less can we believe that He should have renounced all the promises made to the Jews, as found in the Old Testament, for the simple reason that they had continued to obey His laws.

The object of the appearance of Christ under these circumstances, can hardly be explained, because if the Jews lived up to the laws submitted to them by God, they would receive, after death, all they could desire, and what advantage, therefore, would a belief in Christ give them over and above their fellow-believers of former generations? The mission ascribed to Christ is—Matthew, Chap. xviii, verse 11:

“For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.” Without doubt many of the Jews lived strictly up to the laws of Moses, and consequently were saved; so that the mission of Christ could not apply to them. Yet His special mission professed to be the salvation of the Jews. How is one to reconcile these contradictions?

Neither does the doctrine as to the impossibility of the rich entering heaven agree with a common sense view of the subject. In the first place it is difficult to explain who is to be considered as rich. Any surplus above the absolute necessities of life may, in one sense, be considered riches. In any sense it is but a comparative term, depending upon surrounding circumstances. If the richest man gives away all he has, the next wealthy man is the richest, and so on down to the poorest. If the Bible injunction, to give all to the poor was strictly carried out, human progress would come to a stand-still; the desire of gain, that greatest impulse to industry, would not longer have an object, and mankind would sink into the most stoical and fatal indifference. If universal communism was the object of this theory, no special recommendation to assist the poor would have been necessary. What then, was the object?

Man has, in the first place, to earn his subsistence. The more industrious worker, or in other words, the better man, by assiduous application acquires greater skill and obtains better results than his more indifferent fellow, and becomes rich. According to the Christian theory we are discussing, he has, by these well-directed efforts, shut the gates of heaven upon himself; while to the lazy and indifferent they are always open.

It will not do to suggest that this doctrine is directed only to the wickedly rich, because it is the rich, and the rich alone, that are expressly mentioned. Now wealth gives the best means of doing good, and if it is employed to add to the general welfare, this Bible doctrine of it, must be erroneous. Moreover, wealth is an accumulation simply of the Creator's products, and why its mere possession should

be an obstacle to getting to heaven is, therefore, incomprehensible.

Many other doctrines are just as inconsistent. Take, for instance, Matthew, Chap. v, verse 4: "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" Those who have something to lose can mourn; but those who never were favored with anything near and dear to them, and consequently cannot mourn its loss, are, in addition to that misfortune, deprived of the divine blessing. Those who lose anything will mourn without the inducement of a blessing.

Matthew, Chap. v, verse 5: "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*" This doctrine is totally unintelligible; for what means the inheritance of the earth, and what advantage would it be, from a religious point of view, to inherit the earth and not heaven? For if they inherited the earth they would be rich, and that, as has before been mentioned, is a fatal bar to heaven.

Neither can I conceive why some few individuals of that time should have had the preferred right of being miraculously dealt with, not knowing Christ before or acknowledging Him afterwards; and why others should be converted by miracles, when in our present age miracles are needed for such conversions just as much. Neither can I conceive why miracles should be resorted to as a means of convincing those who, after all, would not believe; or why the most trifling circumstances should afford the inducement for such miracles, while a few of a more substantial character would have had a greater and more impressive effect. The servant of the heathen ruler was cured from a distance at the representation of those who did not believe in Christ; the only reason given being that this ruler was civil to the Jews. The son of the widow was recalled to life to please his mother; Lazarus was raised from the dead because he was a personal friend of Christ.

This special favoritism and the obscurity of these miracles always attracted my attention. I could not understand why Christ should have availed Himself of such small tricks, as

I may term them, for the saving of the world. There was certainly no need for God, who had created all things, to show His power in such an insignificant way.

The most perplexing teachings of all, however, are those inculcating perfect subordination to Christ, regardless of all circumstances and consequences.

Matthew, Chap. viii, verse 21; also Luke, Chap. ix, verse 59.

21. *And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

22. *But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

Luke, Chap. ix. verse 61: *And another said, Lord, I will gladly follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*

62. *And Jesus said unto him, "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."*

These expressions cannot be misunderstood, and they are, to my mind, most heartless and cruel. On studying them I was convinced that if they were the doctrines advocated by Christ, He could not have been a God sent to save mankind. If He demanded that to follow Him, we should recklessly sever the most sacred ties, and disregard our affection for the living and our respect for the dead, He asked us to become brutes, incapable of love or human tenderness. Such could not be the commands of a messenger sent by an all-loving God.

This, more than any other point, perhaps, led me to distrust the words of the New Testament, and I had to decide whether I should accept such teachings, which made of my God a most cruel and unnatural One; or else renounce them altogether and follow my own conviction of a good and infallibly-just Creator. For many weeks the conflict in my mind upon this question was most severe. I had to abandon what was once my most sacred belief, my only hope of salvation. As a result my ideas of a future glor-

ious eternal life were shattered. And in rejecting the inspiration of the Scriptures, my faith, even in a God, was shaken. I was left without my previous religious consolation, and life was apparently become aimless. Morality then became my only guide. I determined to live and act so that, no matter what the future might be, I might enter it with a clear record. This was my principle for many years; but it did not satisfy me. I could not bring myself to believe that the whole Scripture was a farce, so I made a more complete investigation of it; particularly of that portion upon which Christianity is based. I became convinced at last that the greater part is unreliable and unworthy of belief; and the result of my examination of the New Testament, as set forth in the following pages, will, I believe, leave a similar impression upon the mind of the thoughtful reader.

SUPERSTITION AND RELIGION.

Before passing at once to our consideration of the New Testament and the Christian religion, it seems necessary to refer briefly to the condition of things anterior to their appearance. Millions of people are reading the Bible and admiring the wonderful tales related therein, who do not stop to consider that it is the record of a time when reading and writing were arts familiar to the very few, and of a people steeped in ignorance and superstition. The history of events in general were transmitted from mouth to mouth, and magnified or altered according to the imagination or untruthfulness of those who took upon themselves to perform this duty. All statements in regard to those times have, therefore, to be accepted with great caution, because the want of proper means of transmitting the record of events would prevent the securing, in many instances, of original reports. The New Testament originated under such circumstances, and the men who originated it, had scant facilities for educating their minds, or proper communication for correctly informing themselves as to what happened outside of their immediate surroundings. Why, under such circumstances, these writers are to be believed on their own representations, when such representations, too, are totally opposed to common sense, is a mystery; and yet an enlightened class of society is yet found, who give credence to their wonderful tales. Science has shown that in the minutely regulated laws of the Universe, no such occurrences could have happened as these writers describe; but

the believers are deaf and blind to such argument. Some of the more thoughtful try to explain these mysteries of the Scriptures in such a way that they may not conflict with Nature's immutable laws; and a few others have been bold enough to show the utter impossibility of such unnatural occurrences. But both of these have failed to get much of a hearing from the believers, as the latter rely upon the simple dogma of the Book itself, that to the Almighty all things are possible.

It is singular that in our present century, when art and science are undergoing such marvellous developments, religion so far from advancing, should in general rather retrograde. In the beginning Christianity experienced great opposition, and for the most part only ignorant and superstitious people accepted this most mysterious, though most promising belief. The Scribes and Pharisees could not be convinced of the divine mission of Christ, albeit Christ lived among them. But in our age scholars who are thoroughly familiar with science, and who are cognizant of its conflict with the tales of the Bible, will, nevertheless, adhere to the mysteries of that little book, about whose authors we know so little that can inspire us with confidence in them. There are many, however, even among professing Christians, who do not blindly believe in it, and who would follow their better judgment and discard it altogether, but for the Deity with which it is associated. Some of them upon the evidence of their own common sense, do dare to discard it, but when the hour of trial comes their self-dependence gradually departs, and in their weakness they throw themselves again into the arms of the imagined and arbitrary God of Christianity. No other image of the Deity or man's final destiny having been disclosed to them, they yield again to the God of Scriptures, and once more accept its unmitigated fabulousities in silence. This is called the triumph of the Church; it is in reality the weakness of the human mind, and the want of a better understanding of a superior power and of our ultimate destiny.

Such, in general, is the present state of religion in the so-called, civilized world. However, a religious inclination is innate to all human creation, which tends to a recognition of a higher power. This finds expression in various forms, in accordance with the character of the people and the surrounding circumstances. The worshipping of idols, still largely practised, is even associated with the idea of a supreme power, while the more civilized the races become, the more near perfection becomes the image of a deity. This phenomenon is a consequence of evolution, which, in its progress, affects religious conceptions equally as arts and sciences. When races, generally after long and severe struggles, advance in the intellectual scale, the old theories and institutions become useless and lose their controlling influence; better and purer ideas are promulgated and gradually take their place.

Such has been the history of all ancient and modern religious institutions. Take, for example, the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt. The religious principles recognized by a few was the principal cause of this important movement. The Jews were in captivity; their wrongs, their cruel oppression by the Egyptians, their sufferings and struggles, helped, possibly, to bring about that development of mind and intellect which resulted in the formation of a new religious sect. As to the grounds upon which these religious theories were adopted, or what directly led to their adoption, little can be said. Probably, being slaves, they had no opportunity of joining in the Egyptian worship of idols; and consequently they became familiar with the idea of adoring the idols or the gods they were supposed to represent, from a distance, or in mind only. Moses, being a Jew, although educated at the Egyptian court, of course, shared the feelings of his race, but was able, at the same time, to consider impartially which of the two theories would be preferable: the religion of the cold senseless idols, or of invisible ideal divinity. He adopted the latter views, and formulated the new system of religion thereon, which,

in course of time became generally recognized by his people.

But there does not appear to be any evidence that this new religion was general among the Jews before they left Egypt, and that it was in consequence of their religion that Pharaoh allowed them to go. As soon as they had regained their freedom they erected a golden calf, after the manner of their late masters, and proceeded to return the God it represented thanks for their deliverance and pray to it for guidance. It was then that Moses appears to have introduced his new theory of one God of the Jews in place of the many of the Egyptians, a God of whom no idol could be made, of whose perfections the human intellect could form no adequate conception. Moses, the leader of the people, was the high priest of this God, received His communications and delivered His commands. He was represented as a jealous God, who would permit no idols of any kind to detract for the adoration He exacted ; He was avenging and cruel, and the people who worshipped Him were taught to do so in fear and trembling. To satisfy this angry God, burnt offerings were rendered to Him, as they had been to the Egyptian idols, and expiatory offerings of gold and silver and precious things were exacted to avert the consequences of His anger. Under these circumstances the rich were able to purchase the favors of the Almighty, while the poor felt themselves suffering from divine disregard and neglect. Their grievances were aggravated by the haughty bearing of the priests, who had waxed proud and rich upon the valuable offerings to their God. The natural accumulation of wealth, too, may have caused greater oppression to be put upon the to all intent godless poor, and as a consequence prophets arose from time to time who were bold enough to denounce the wickedness of the wealthy and the condition of inequality before God which then existed. They warned the rich against their transgressions and corruption, and prophesied that it would ultimately lead to universal ruin by bringing down upon the people the Divine wrath.

THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST.

In such a condition as we have here shown, was Judea at the time Christ lived. We learn, not only from the New Testament, but from other old historians that many prophets arose about this time, who went from place to place preaching of the moral degeneration of the people and calling them to repentance. Most of them were only preachers of atonement, and adhered strictly to the prophesies and dogmas of the old Jewish religion, which, as has before been shown, was a barbarous theory of awful retribution. The end of the world was near at hand, they said, and all the sinful people would perish in the fire which God would send to destroy the earth.

We read in the Bible that God will destroy the earth and all its living creatures, simply to revenge Himself upon the sinful, and that He will afterward hold judgment over both the wicked and righteous. This is not such an awful ending after all, although it is certainly most peculiar. It is peculiar in, that the Great Judge should punish us first and try us afterward; while the death as described, possesses no unusual horrors, for many have died by fire and other painful ways; and what will it matter to us when we are dead, whether the world continues or not?

However, this was the general belief; that God would destroy the whole world at an early period. But it was promised that before the dreaded end should come, the Messiah would appear, and those who would repent and follow His teachings would be saved thereby from eternal

destruction. This was one idea only of the Messiah. Another was that He would be a mighty conqueror, who would subjugate the whole world to the rule of the Jews and the Jewish religion. The first mentioned theory was the most prominent at the time when Christ appeared, and is even generally adhered to at the present time by those who strictly believe in the word of the old Scriptures.

All these prophets or preachers of penance as referred to before, would gather a certain number of followers, and then sects were formed in the Jewish church through the diverse teachings of these men, but subsequently these differences of opinion being of little importance, in the main, disappeared. Again at all times these prophets had to endure much hardship and persecution, because their admonitions were generally directed against the rich and the corrupt rulers, and in favor of the oppressed and suffering classes of society. Even the rulers of the temple were frequently severely assailed, and we cannot, therefore, consider it strange that these agitators, when they became troublesome, and even dangerous, in respect to existing laws and customs, were persecuted and frequently killed in order to get them out of the way.

Neither can we wonder at this barbarity of former years, as, up to the present century such proceedings have been repeated thousands of times, even against peaceful persons, when they failed to agree in the religious opinion of the majority. It is only in the present generation that a more liberal spirit has gained ground, enforcing the right of every one, to think and act as he chooses so long as they do not interfere with the rights of others.

Two of these former prophets, many of whom are known to us only by name, met with remarkable success in their preachings, so much so that a large part of the population of the Globe, at present, practice their doctrines and adore them as divinities. These two are John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Their success, however natural it may have been brought about, is attributed by believers to the super-

natural providence of God, worked for the special benefit of humanity. It arose, however, from certain special, though widely diverse doctrines of the Old Testament, and from the circumstances under which, and the places where these doctrines in the beginning obtained a foothold. Even the name of John the Baptist would probably not have been made known to us, if his name and teachings had not been cunningly interwoven with the life of Christ. This was done partly in order to verify certain dark intimations of the Old Testament, but more specially to make capital out of the undeniable success and strong influence which he achieved during his lifetime, and to strengthen the belief in the alleged Messiah, Jesus Christ. For the justification of this allegation we have ample evidence, which will be adduced in the course of the discussion.

The teachings of Christ, it should be observed, were entirely different from those of John the Baptist, according to the evidence of the Evangelists themselves. Matthew, Chap. iii, verse 2, quotes John the Baptist as preaching in the wilderness of Judea: "*Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Luke, Chap. iii, verse 7: "*O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*" Mark, Chap. i, verse 4: "*John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*" John, therefore, was a preacher of penitence, like all former prophets, whilst Christ was a preacher of new doctrines and a new religion. He especially sympathized with the poor and suffering class of society, and to them preached patience, mercy, obedience, and humility. He consoled and promised them that they should be rewarded after death for all their sufferings. James, Chap. i, verse 12: "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to them that love Him.*" Chap. vi, verse 10: "*Humble yourselves in the sight of God, and He shall lift you up.*" Chap. vi, verse 7: "*Submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*"

John only preached repentance. He called upon all to be saved, through repentance, from the wrath of a vengeful God, the God of the Jews, while Christ preached a loving and merciful God. This latter dogma certainly caused a new conception of the Deity, and became the foundation of a new religion. Great indeed was this new idea of a God, only good and merciful. These doctrines, however, were not the only cause of His success. He was a friend of the afflicted and strongly denounced the rich and the ruling classes of society, which, in itself, was sufficient to gain for him a largemeed of popularity. James, Chap. v, verses 1-4

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

2. *Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*

3. *Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*

4. *Behold, the hire of the laborers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.*

5. *Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.*

This, of course, was the language to please the poor, envious and dissatisfied people. At all times those who have known how to console and sympathize with the poor and ignorant classes, in opposition to the industrious and wealthy, have been the idols of the former, and soon gained many adherents. Even at the present time, if any one will stand up for them, and if he have the talent to impress them with glowing promises, though he be the greatest scoundrel, and totally incapable of fulfilling such promises, yet will acknowledge him as their saviour and leader, and gladly follow his teachings. In this respect Christ was a socialist, as we would now call Him, and from this He derived the great influence which He exercised.

This characteristic of Christ we observe, not only in what is said by Peter and James direct, but also from the statements of the Evangelists, who revealed, in general, the spirit of Christ's teachings. Mark, Chap. x. verse 21. "*One thing thou lackest; go thy way sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.*"

This doctrine naturally excited hatred against the wealthier class and the rulers and dignitaries of the temple, and being, moreover, dangerous to the maintenance of social rule and order—however much of it might be based on religious principles—those holding it, naturally suffered great persecution, and some few were made martyrs to their belief—for which, however, they were to receive glory in heaven.

We cannot suppose that Christ was aware of the revolutionary spirit He inspired by preaching such doctrine. He wandered quietly and in an unassuming way among the people, counselling, advising, and teaching everywhere the poorer people to put their trust in God. No hate or evil was in Him; He only wished to point out the way to heaven. Can we be surprised, then, that this man, who would suffer insult and persecution without a murmur, even praying for His enemies and those who injured Him, should be idolized by His followers and generally regarded as a superior being? He suffered severe persecution, and willingly gave His own life for the salvation of sinners, in full confidence of receiving commensurate reward from His God.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

Very little indeed is known to us of the life and action of this remarkable man that we can accept as reliable. The several reports of the evangelists, which are supposed to relate the same proceedings, are only very short; and consist to a great extent of teachings, and parables, and wondrous stories. There are in them but little of the real life and work of Christ. The most prominent feature, of course, is the consummation of what they allege to be His divinely-appointed mission—His death for the sins of the world.

About His birth we have only vague and confused reports. From a few hints we may suppose that His father was a carpenter, and that He had brothers and sisters living. Such facts are readily kept in circulation, and are generally well remembered.

Most probably He was born at Nazareth, in Galilee, as He was generally known by the name of the Nazarene. He was known to John as Jesus the Nazarene only. The reports of Matthew and Luke, as regards the birth of Christ at Bethlehem, in Judea, we cannot consider reliable, and we must regard them, as will be shown later on in this work, simply as a distortion of facts to fit in with some intimations of the Old Testament. Therein are expected certain dark indications that the Messiah would be born of the line of David, and at the great king's birthplace, and these two historians of Christ therefore described the circumstances attending Christ's appearance on earth as having transpired at Bethlehem instead of Nazareth.

Nazareth was a quiet little place, and beautifully situated. It was a pretty valley, surrounded on either side with vine-clad hills, and we can easily imagine how quiet and tranquil its life must have been, compared with the populous cities of Judea and Galilee, agitated and degenerated, politically and religiously, as they were. The vices of the larger cities, and especially of the capital, Jerusalem—the centre of the wealth and commerce of Judea—had probably not much affected the life and morals of the inhabitants of this little place. They, in all likelihood, consisted entirely of small farmers, shepherds, and a few enjoyed the more modest mechanical pursuits, and little excitement ever disturbed their peaceful habits.

The Jews were then, as at present, sincerely devoted to their traditional religion, and we may believe that in such a place the devotion would be purer and more sincere than in the larger cities, where constant temptation and bad example do so much to corrupt the multitude.

In this peaceful place Christ passed the days of His childhood, in undisturbed tranquility. He probably had good and moral parents, and grew up to manhood imbued with the most tender feelings, together with a strong sense of justice, and the purest conception of God and religion. He probably, according to custom, went at intervals to Jerusalem with His parents, when they repaired there to make their offerings in the Temple, and on these occasions caught glimpses of that intenser life which characterizes important centres of commerce and population. Being intelligent and pure in mind, He quickly observed the rottenness and corruption of its society, its hypocrisy, its dissipation, and learned to abhor it.

This feeling of abhorrence for the things that are bad, naturally brought Him in contact with some of the prophets, who had arisen to preach against the immorality and Godlessness of the people. He may have heard the fervid words of John the Baptist, and believing his doctrine to the full, probably have been baptized by him. Then, after this

awakening of His spirit, or strengthening of His convictions, it might have been—He felt that He could no longer look on at all this wickedness around Him, that He, also, must do something to warn His fellow-beings of the precipice toward which, in the blindness of their sin, they were rushing, and so He came to stand up among them as a preacher.

Having himself lived but in moderate circumstances He was familiar with the afflictions of the poor, and toward them he was especially affectionate. The candor of His mind and His sincere religious spirit, gave Him strength and power to speak, and His ability to minister cheerful consolation to those who suffered, brought large attendance. His success may soon have inspired Him with the idea, that He was especially commissioned by God for this high office of teacher and prophet, and the more exalted would His utterances become in consequence. The responsibility of the position He had assumed would also have made Him careful of His conduct, and this, combined with His natural kindness and purity of character, would render Him sublime among men of His time and explain the reverence with which they crowded round Him.

In His religious exaltation He may have felt Himself drawn nearer toward His imagined God, and being honored and adored by a multitude, might have become possessed with the idea that He really was a superior being; that He really was the promised and long expected Messiah, the King of the Jews, as David was; not, however, of this world, but of that which is to come.

Such unnatural delusions are not exceptional. They are frequently met with in daily life, in a more or less exalted form, and whenever it assumes a definite character we call it mania. Generally such a condition is brought about by excitement, or over strain of the brain.

A similar condition of mind was experienced by the author himself, who, as already stated, at one time labored under the delusion that He was one destined for a higher mission, namely, to be a missionary and perhaps a martyr

in the cause of Christianity. Christ, perhaps affected with a similar idea, wandered around vouchsafing blessings and benedictions to all who were devoted to Him, consoling the sick and giving good advice to the afflicted. His words may frequently have had a beneficial effect, and even if they did not, it would be imagined that they had; and in this way the report probably gained ground that he healed the sick through His words. Even in our present age similar legends are believed in.

His heroic death as a martyr sealed His course. He had sacrificed Himself for the benefit of Humanity, and had allegorically taken the sins of others upon Him. To those who would trust in Him he was a saviour. His adopted character was established.

EXPLANATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

JUDE.

The most reliable documents of the life of Christ and His teachings, are the letters from His apostles, James, John and Peter. The reports from them are the most trustworthy, and are not so extreme in their statements, as some of the other reports. We must consider it a peculiar circumstance that these documents are placed at the end of the New Testament, which leads to the suspicion that they were purposely arranged in this way, by those who compiled the Scriptures, in order to abate or lessen the importance of the testimony they contain—which, as we have said, is truthful, but exceedingly moderate.

The last of these letters is from Jude, who, evidently, was not an apostle and never saw Christ, therefore, this communication is of little value in regard to Christ. But relative to other matters, his testimony is of importance, and may well be considered here.

The very first sentence of the letter says : Chap. i, verse 1 : “*Jude, the servant of Christ and the brother of James, to them that we are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.*” This expression evidently shows that Christ had some selected apostles, who were held to be more sanctified than His other followers. Jude himself was not one of these sanctified, even if he was a brother of James, as he states ; because if so, he would not have referred to his brother as being one of the sanctified.

We may even assume that he never had seen or heard Christ, for he says—Jude, Chap. i, verse 17. “*But beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” If he had heard the words, he would not have referred to the Apostles, but would speak of what he had himself heard, which he surely would have remembered better than words repeated to him by others.

He must, however, have had great confidence in Christ, believing sincerely in His saving power; for he says: Jude, Chap. i, verse 21. “*Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ into eternal life.*”

In the beginning of Christianity it seems that the adopted character of Christ as the Son of God, the long-promised Messiah, and King of the Jews, with all the glory assigned to those characters, was not generally recognized, as Jude appears not to have known or to have believed in it. In concluding his message he alone refers to God. Jude, Chap. i. verse 25. “*To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.*”

The whole epistle gives us almost his exact idea about Christ. He always speaks of Jesus Christ as his Lord and superior Master, but of glory and majesty to the only God. He has great veneration for Christ, and believes Him to have superior grace with God, but to judge from his style of writing, is not impressed at all with the idea of His supernatural power and character.

And there is this feature of his writings that cannot fail to attract attention, namely, that while he makes distinct references to the wonders recorded in the Old Testament—the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the contention of the archangel Michael with the devil, and the miraculous deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt—he does not allude to a single wonder attributed to Christ. He does not seem to know anything about them. He does not even mention a single doctrine or ordinance of Christ; but refers only to the wonders and ordinances of the Old Testament, where

God rewards or punishes His people according to their desserts.

That Jude, the brother of James, the Apostle of Christ, who lived at the same time with Him; who not only was converted and believed in Christ, but even preached in His name, should not mention a single incident in the life of Christ, nor any of the doctrines or commandments attributed to him, leaves us in a state of uncertainty, indeed, as to what was the prevalent opinion of Christ during His lifetime.

From this we must conclude that Christ was looked upon as a prophet—as one of the many prophets of those times—that He had His followers who adored Him, and ascribed to Him special grace with God. No extraordinary occurrence, however, according to this testimony, appears to have happened during His lifetime to verify His alleged divine mission.

Christ may have himself believed in his supernatural character, and this also may have been believed by a large part of His followers, but none of the Apostles except John give evidence of any conception of this kind; and surely James would have inspired his brother with this opinion, if he himself had been convinced of it. Jude, in his letter, clearly shows us the original teachings and character of Christ: a preacher of atonement to the glorification of God, and a reviver of the old religion, which at those times was probably sadly corrupted. He attributes nothing supernatural to him. He considers Him only a prophet of the Jews, like many before Him, and selected to this mission by God. We need not wonder that Jude believed Him to be a superior human being, one selected by God for a special work, because at those times it was a generally-accepted doctrine that God personally interfered with the actions of men; that He sent angels as messengers or as guardians to them; and that He selected from among men those, who should speak His word on earth. The conviction of Jude, therefore, that Christ was specially selected by God for His mission, we cannot consider strange or unwarrantable.

JAMES.

The author of the letter attributed to James we can have no doubt was the apostle of Christ, of whom also Jude testifies. James followed Christ on His wanderings, and was therefore thoroughly conversant with his teachings and ideas. He was certainly, judging from his style of writing, a good-hearted man, as there is no doubt Christ Himself was. He had found in Christ the man of his heart, good in mind and pure of morals; Christ's teachings had his sincere approval, and the attachment he entertained for Him was unlimited. He even considered Christ superior to himself, and called him his Lord all through this epistle.

From James we obtain a more perfect idea of the teachings and doctrine of Christ. For instance: James, Chap. i, verse 2: "*My brethren, count it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*" and so on, giving the power and glory exclusively to God. Chap. i. verses 5 and 6: "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God * * * * **" "*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.*" We observe here his idea of God. There is in it no element of idolatry; it is the plain imagining of a great, good, and merciful God, who will do all for us, if we trust entirely in Him.

According to the doctrines of the Old Testament God was adored as a strong and almighty ruler, a chastening and a revengeful God, and offerings had to be brought to His place of resort—which the Temple was represented as being—to reconcile Him. James, however, adopting perhaps, the doctrines of Christ in regard to this point, represents Him as a good, merciful and invariably just God, and as dwelling in heaven only. He says Chap. i, verse 17: "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*" We are, he goes on to say, to exert ourselves to please Him, and to

patiently bear all tortures visited upon us, for His sake. Chap. v, verse 10: "*Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure.*"

All adoration and veneration was to be directed to God only, for whose sake so many had already suffered. This was the great idea of the new doctrine. In connection with this idea were the glorious prospects of the future—which for the poor and suffering people were especially glorious—and the damnation of the rich, who had already received their reward on earth.

This formed the foundation of the principles of the new sect.

Chap. i. verse 12: "*Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love him?*"

6. *But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?"*

Chap. i, verse 11: *For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof fulleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade in his ways.*

Chap. v, verse 1, 2 and 8: *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.*

2. *Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*

3. *Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*

This fearful condemnation of all the rich is entirely a socialistic principle, and although in contrast with the teachings of patience, humility and love to each other, is calculated to excite the fanatics and enthusiasts among the poor. His teachings in general, however, were extracts from the old laws and commandments.

Chap. ii, verse 8: *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:*

10. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

Chap. iv, verse 12: *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?*

Only faith in God and doing the works of the law would justify.

Chap. ii, verse 24: *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*

25. *Likewise also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way.*

By all this James shows himself to be a thorough and unprejudiced Israelite. The old prophets were his witnesses, and the law and commandments of the Old Testament his doctrines. God is his only Supreme Being, to whom only we have to direct ourselves; in his judgment, and he does not allude at all to Christ and His alleged divine character and power. He only believes in Christ as his earthly Lord and Master; a Prophet of the Jews, elected by God to this mission, and was a friend of God, in the same way, as Elias, Job and Abraham were.

Chap. ii, verse 11: *And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*

Chap. v, verse 23: *Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.*

We may even admit that James held Christ to be greater than all former prophets, and attributed to him the highest reverence as an inspired prophet; but we cannot find the slightest trace of his having believed Christ to be a divine or supernatural character.

Chap. ii, verse 1: *My brethren, have not the faith of*

our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

Chap. v, verse 15. *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

He glorifies the Lord only, for His tenderness and pitifulness, and praises Him highly, but does not allude to a single wonder attributed to Christ, or make mention of any doctrine or parable attributed to Him of which we have so many in other parts of the Testament. Instead, thereof, he refers to the Old Testament, and cites the wonders recorded there.

Chap. v, verse 17. *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

18. *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

The testimony of James gives us a perfectly clear idea of his opinion of the character of Christ, and the absence of any reference to the miracles, special doctrines, and divine adoration of Christ must be taken as satisfactory evidence that nothing of this kind was known to him, as he most assuredly would have alluded to them, had they come under his observation or even to his knowledge.

Even the opinion that Christ was a prophet is not proven, so far as his writings show, by any particular evidence; and it must therefore be accepted as a suggestion merely. As all teachers of new doctrines have their followers, so James was a follower of Christ, and was inspired by His ways and teachings to believe Him, what He represented Himself to be, which, however, is far from a divine character.

JOHN.

The Epistles.

We can have no doubt that the author of these letters was John, the Apostle of Christ, and to whom they also are generally attributed. To prove this is difficult, but his unassuming and devoted manner of writing, and his evident intimate relation to other members of the new church, who are also mentioned by other writers, is satisfactory evidence that he was a recognized dignitary of this church. Therefore, as we should not reject the authenticity of any part without good reason; we must concede that John was the real author of these epistles.

He certainly was a sincere religious man, with most tender feelings. This is proved by the extremely humble, devoted and unassuming style of his communications. He was thoroughly captivated by the highly sentimental spirit of Christ, and absolutely convinced of His divine mission. He even bestows upon Him the title of Son of God, which is in consonance with the exalted and visionary character he exposes in all his expressions. He commences his introduction in most lofty words.

John I, Chap. i, verse 1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*

2. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)*

His imagination carries him still further. Christ, he says, was not only Son of God, but part of Him; and with the twain John himself even claims to have fellowship.

I, Chap. i, verse 3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

John's conception of Christ, it will be observed, is entirely different from that of any of the other apostles. He has the most exalted image of Him. Christ to him, is no preacher of atonement or prophet, but an independent divine spirit, with absolute dominion over all things that are.

I, Chap. i, verse 7. *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of His Son Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.*

9. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

I, Chap. iv, verse 2. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.*

We must, however, take well into consideration that these letters were written long after the death of Christ, which is proved by John's reference to Gajus and Diotrephus, converts of later date. We can hardly believe that the foregoing represents his original opinion about Christ, but must assume that the idea of His divinity was developed gradually with the increasing exalted condition of mind, that at the issue of the revelation had reached its climax of imagination and confusion.

Intimations of some special doctrines of Christ, we have from him, but these have reference to God only. These doctrines he styles messages, and they may really be the doctrines of Christ Himself.

I, Chap. i, verse 5. *This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*

Chap. ii, verse 15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Chap. iv, verse 12. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.*

John's remark that he has no new commandments may be proof that Christ did not introduce any new doctrines,

such as the Divine Trinity, which, therefore, must have been an interpretation of John.

I, Chap. ii, verse 7. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.*

In contradistinction to this thus, we have Chap. v, verse 7. *“For there are those that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.”* The exact nature of this Holy Ghost remains an enigma; the idea of it, no doubt, sprung from the greater or less devotional entanglement and religious imaginings from which John seems to have especially suffered. He does not say what it is, but simply calls it a spirit. This, however, is not the only spirit of his imagination. I, Chap. iv, verse 1. *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone into the world; hereby ye know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.”*

Probably John was a spiritualist, and believed that every thought was inspired by spirits, and consequently, God also, must be represented by a spirit; to this, John gave the name of the Holy Ghost. This idea of the Godhead, however, is not referred to either by Peter, James or Jude, and it therefore must also have been of later date.

The only new theory about religion which he pretends to reveal, is that the darkness of spiritual ignorance which overshadowed the world, has passed away. I, Chap. ii, verse 8. *“Again a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and you, because the darkness is passed and true light now shineth.”* Those who believe, he elevates even to a sublime relation to God.

Chap. iii, verse 1. *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.*

He seems, however, to have been well aware that the people, in general, would not recognize his revelation.

Although we may admit that John was a candid believer in Christ, and that all he wrote and spoke was in accordance with this sincere conviction, nevertheless, we must object to the correctness of his theories which were not in accord with those of the other apostles, and in regard to which he experienced strong opposition at the time when he recalled them. According to his own statement, many who had been converted to these theories, afterwards deserted or disavowed them. These deserters John called anti-Christ.

I, Chap. ii, verse 18. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that anti-Christ shall come, even now are there many anti-Christ; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*

III, Chap. i, verse 9. *"I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephus, who loveth to have preminence among them, receiveth us not."*

John also was mistaken in believing that the "last time" was near, because of the appearance of these anti-Christ, or false "prophets" who especially disputed the theories appertaining to Christ. I, Chap. vi, verse 1. *"Because many false prophets are gone into the world."* II, Chap. i, verse 7. *"For many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and Anti-Christ."* Perhaps many of these prophets, or teachers of other theories, may have exercised an influence equal to that of John, which may account for the acerbity of his accusations. He not only terms them anti-Christ, but also calls them liars and deceivers. I, Chap ii, verse 22. *"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Anti-Christ that denieth the Father and the Son."*

These anti-Christ's were probably as severe in their denunciations of the Christians, as John was against them and their followers. John was, no doubt, right from his point of view, that they were deceivers, having himself accepted the belief that Christ was God's only Son, and the Saviour of the world; and if we unreservedly believe in John, we have to acknowledge the truth of his doctrines. However, since he himself admits that the opposition and disbelief of these doctrines was so great at a time when the actions and death of Christ ought to have been still in good remembrance, and when the alleged miracles should have been convincing evidence unto every one, then we are justified in asking, what the real of this opposition must have been, before also we accept his revelations unreservedly.

The argument may probably be advanced that the success of the Christian church is the best proof of its validity and a confirmation of John's revelations. But this argument has no foundation, as Mohammedanism, for instance, met with great success, and was largely supported for centuries later. Neither can we suppose that the doctrines of John, as expressed in his letters, were so generally recognized and adopted, as he would have us believe. The Christian church probably progressed to some extent under the reformed Jewish doctrines, taught by Peter, James, Jude and others. The letters of John, however, were probably received only by few communities, and later, when the whole Scriptures were collected and compiled, some of his new doctrines were extracted from them.

We may even argue that the doctrines of the present Christian church are entirely at variance with those of the first Christian church, if we take the testimony of the other apostles as evidence. If, in forming our judgment upon the credibility to be attached to the doctrines of John, we take into consideration his highly exalted and visionary spirit, in connection with the weakness of the arguments adduced by him to justify his belief, then we may reasonably become distrustful. His arguments to prove the al-

leged character of Christ, are most equivocal and absurd, and as they depend entirely upon the testimony of one other, and no actual proof is adduced, they are of no consequence.

I, Chap. v, verse 6. *"This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."*

8. *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

9. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son.*

10. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.*

20. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*

We observe here that a belief in God is the foundation; a belief in the God who recorded the coming of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. Consequently, we first have to believe in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and those who reject this mass of nonsense, reject God and Christianity, and make of God a liar.

The absence of any reference to the miracles attributed to Christ is, in the letter of John, particularly striking. They would be the only tangible testimony by which to demonstrate the divinity of Christ; and yet this most important testimony, if any there was, he neglects to cite. There can be no doubt that he saw, and indeed lived with Christ, as he refers to this frequently, (which also will be shown later) and that he does not allude to any of the miracles here, shows, either that he did not know of them, or was not convinced that they were miracles. I, Chap. i,

verse 2. "*For the life is manifest, and we have seen it, and bear witness.*" I, Chap. i, verse 5. "*This is the message we have heard of Him and declare unto you.*" I, Chap. vi, verse 14. "*And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*" He does cite the fable in reference to Cain, but nothing of the kind in regard to Christ. I, Chap. iii, verse 12. "*Not as Cain, who was of the wicked one and slew his brother. And Wherefore slew he him? Because his own work were evil, and his brother's righteous.*"

The shallowness of John's mind, on the other hand, is shown in the following selection from his communications. II, Chap. i, verse 1. "*The elder unto the select Lady and her children whom I love in the truth.*" I, Chap. i, verse 4. "*I rejoice greatly that I found thy children walking in the truth.*" I, Chap. ii, verse 12. "*I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.*" I, Chap. ii, verse 13. "*I write unto you fathers; I write unto you young men, etc.*" I, Chap. v, verse 31. "*Little children keep yourselves from idols.*" II, Chap. i, verse 13. "*The children of thy elect, sisters, greet thee.*" III, Chap. i, verse 4. "*I have no greater joy than to hear my children walk in the truth.*"

We may well believe that John was good-hearted, inoffensive and simple-minded, and that the mildness of his character won the love of all who surrounded him, and also made him the specially beloved apostle of Christ, for which he is praised so much. He was, however, highly visionary and imaginative, a common characteristic of such unsubstantial minds.

It is also of importance that we should consider the time when John wrote his epistles, in order to determine the likelihood of any change in his ideas having taken place since the first impressions he received on the subject from Christ. From the people to whom he refers in this epistle, it will be seen from the epistles of Paul and Luke's "Acts," that it must have been written long after the death of

Christ. See John, III, Chap. i, verse 9; Romans, Chap. xvi, verse 23; 1 Corinthians I, Chap. i, verse 14; Acts, Chap. xviv, verse 29; Acts, Chap. xviv, verse 24. This lapse of years and the increasing mysteries about Christ could not have been without effect on John, who especially on account of his peculiarly shallow nature, must have been influenced by suggestions and illusions, in consequence of which, any exaggeration and distortion may be easily explained.

PETER.

Peter is an ardent believer in Christ as the Son of God, who was sent from heaven to call the faithful to earthly virtue and heavenly glory, a mission which was sealed by His death and bodily or spiritual resurrection.

I, Chap. i, verse 3. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

II, Chap. i, verse 3. *According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*

Peter is the faithful and straightforward apostle of Christ, who is confident that he was especially elected by his God to the high mission of an apostle to His Son the Saviour of the world. In this conviction he speaks in proud terms of himself.

I, Chap. i, verse 1. *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; Grace be unto you and peace be multiplied.*

He had probably originally belonged to the old orthodox sect and believed strictly in all that was written in the old Scripture, which was well known to him. That Christ was the expected Messiah which the old prophets had mentioned, was evidently clear to him. He believed that in Christ these prophecies were really fulfilled.

I, Chap. i, verse 10. *Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you :*

11. *Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the suffering of Christ and the glory that should follow.*

II, Chap. i, verse 20. *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.*

Peter in these deliberations evidently referred to the following passages of Isaiah, as there are no other prophecies reflecting on the life of Christ which so exactly fit in with this statement.

Isaiah, Chap. liii, verse 3. *He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him ; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.*

7. *He was oppressed, and He was afflicted. yet He opened not His mouth ; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.*

This prophecy of Isaiah might perhaps, be worthy of serious consideration, as it does seem to have some reference to the actual character and sufferings of Christ ; but as the Old Testament abounds in prophecies—and especially in regard to an expected Messiah—most of which, however, cannot by any possibility be proved to have any reference to Christ, as they describe an entirely different character, it would not be very logical to select this intimation of Isaiah as being the only genuine prophecy in regard to Christ's coming. Moreover, we must take into consideration that

Christ was not the only one who suffered persecution, and even death, for the sake of religion.

But the fact of Christ's death for religion's sake seemed to Peter satisfactory proof that Christ must be the much heralded and expected Messiah. This view, in his opinion, being confirmed by Christ's conduct and character.

I, Chap. ii, verse 21. *For even hereunto were ye called ; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps :*

22. *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.*

Owing to this belief and his sincere reverence for God he preached, we must admit, the language of conviction. Throughout all his discourses we observe that he was moved by his strong faith in the writings of the Old Testament, that to God no other way was left to save the corrupted world from damnation, except by sending a special Messiah, or even His own Son, upon the earth. And his conception was, too, that this special Messiah had to take all sin upon Himself and suffer for it persecution and even death. So that one punishment might answer for the wickedness of the whole world, and by which God might be sufficiently avenged and mollified.

And why should not Peter believe that these prophecies had reference to Christ, and that Christ was sent for these purposes? In his experience he found, or professed to find, in Christ a man of mild and loving character, teaching the sublimest doctrine, who knew all about the future, and who endured all manner of persecution patiently. "*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,*" and who died a martyr's death for the sake of the religious theories he propagated.

I, Chap. ii, verse 23. *Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously :*

24. *Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.*

Peter himself, perhaps, following the example of the older prophets, seems to have prosecuted his studies into the ways of God to a considerable extent.

II, Chap. ii, verse 3. *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you ; whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

4. *For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment ;*

9. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

He even knows exactly the proceedings of Christ in Heaven.

I, Chap. iii, verse 22. *Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God ; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.*

Just as strong as his belief was in Christ, the Messiah and Son of God, was his belief also that Christ arose from the dead and ascended into Heaven. I, Chap. i, verse 3. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

Verse 21. *Who by him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory ; that your faith and hope might be in God.*

I, Chap. iii, verse 22. *Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God.*

His idea of the resurrection of Christ, it should be pointed out, differs from what was the general belief, in that he had not seen and does not mean in his epistle to refer to a resurrection of the body, but a resurrection of the spirit only.

I, Chap. iii, verse 18. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to*

God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit :

19. *By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.*

He was familiar, it seems, with the story that Christ had appeared to those who had been imprisoned, and alludes to it in the above mystical manner. It appears very clearly that he felt obliged, in some way, to confirm the resurrection of Christ and his reappearance on earth, and that he supported it by adopting what was idle rumor. That he ever saw Christ after death he does not mention. He may have been confident of the resurrection of Christ in the sense attached to Jewish doctrines, namely, that the spirit departed from the body after death and went to heaven or hell according to its merits. And this Peter concedes by his statement that Christ "died in the flesh but was quickened by the Spirit." If a resurrection of the body had taken place Peter, one would think, must have known of it, and if so he would not have especially alluded to a resurrection "in the Spirit." The Spirit could be imagined to be anywhere, and no doubt those who were imprisoned for religion's sake imagined that Christ was with them "in the Spirit." This they perhaps testified to, and not that Christ was with them in the body.

There is a special absence in Peter, as will be observed, of any reference to miracles of Christ. But here is one exception.

II, Chap. i, verse 17. *For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*

18. *And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.*

This is the only miracle Peter refers to in proof of the Divinity of Christ. Such revelation was of course necessary as a foundation for his own teachings and assertions. We may even believe, Peter was himself convinced that some

such revelation had been made; but even then we cannot accept his representation of it. We must allow something for imagination. Let us suppose that Christ, with some of His apostles or followers, having been opposed, persecuted and ridiculed went together, depressed in mind, into the mountains to seek consolation in seclusion. The sky was dark and threatening, and intensified their melancholy. Here they lay moody and disappointed, when the thunder storm which had been gathering burst above them with startling force. In their superstitious zeal they eagerly accepted this as a sign from God, sent as consolation to them and to demonstrate God's power and majesty, and His divine affection toward Jesus Christ. This impression took firm hold of the apostles; the occurrence was afterwards represented by them as a special divine visitation.

This supposition we find in some way supported by Luke's testimony of the occurrence. In this it is more highly illustrated, which we attribute to the natural desire of that time to shroud religion as much as possible in mystery.

Luke, Chap. ix, verse 32. *But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him.*

The difference between these two reports is most striking. While Luke states that Christ appeared communing with two shining men, Peter says that God revealed Himself direct, and does not refer to any shining personages at all. As Peter is said to have been present, his report is perhaps preferable. The two statements show, however, that the natural phenomenon which we suppose to have taken place was variously interpreted. Luke having heard an exaggerated report, perhaps, had endeavored to get at the real facts, and Peter, being closely questioned, had admitted that they "were heavy with sleep" at the time, and therefore could not well comprehend or remember the exact details of the heavenly visitation. On both sides there is shown a want of authenticity such as such important testimony demanded.

We must also take into consideration that miracles were expected and demanded by the Jews, from their Messiah, how otherwise were they to believe in Him. Their former prophets had worked miracles. There were also as Peter tells us, II, Chap. ii, verse 1, "false prophets also among the people," and how were they to distinguish the false from the true, except through the miraculous works by which the true prophets of a preceding age had demonstrated their divine mission?

Peter, immediately after describing the heavenly visitation continues.

II, Chap. i, verse 19. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*

This seems to have been added with an idea of giving strength to, and increasing the mystery, connected with God's visit. Peter very possibly distrusted the general acceptance of this miraculous occurrence, and therefore refers to the word of prophecy, which he believed would not be doubted, and goes on to enforce the reliability of these prophecies. II. Chap. i, verse 20. *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

We cannot fail to observe that this report of Peter of the only miracle which occurred to him, seems to be somewhat forced, and not to originate from thorough conviction. But it is evident that he in his persuasion relies entirely on the Old Testament, and that he has nothing else on which to substantiate his belief in Christ.

II, Chap. ii, verse 5. *And spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

6. *And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into*

ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly ;

7. *And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked :*

He even refers to the most ridiculous fables of the Old Testament: II, Chap. ii, verse 16 ; “ *But was rebuked for his iniquity ; the dumb are speaking with man’s voice, or bade the madness of the prophet.*”

He also believes in the mysterious doctrines of the Old Scriptures in regard to the coming destruction of the world.

II, Chap, iii, verse 10. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.*

Peter, however, does not appear to know of any special doctrines or any miracles relating to the life and actions of Christ (with the only exception just considered) and we may therefore conclude that there were none, as if there had been, he would surely have referred to them in preference to citing miracles and stories from the Old Testament. On the contrary, he evidently knows that wonderful stories were in circulation in regard to Christ, for he takes the trouble to denounce them. He had followed Christ himself, and knew well what stories in regard to him it was safe to give credence to. His candid mind did not see the necessity of advocating the truth of these fables ; they appeared to him unnecessary ; he had been a witness of Christ’s majesty and was convinced of his divine mission without them.

II, Chap. i, verse 16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty.*

Peter wrote his first letter from Babylon, where Marcus, the evangelist, whom he calls his son, was with him. Marcus later, probably after Peter’s death, became the constant companion of Paul.

I, Chap. v, verse 13. *The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you : and so doth Marcus my son.*

He was probably very old when he wrote this, and expected soon to pass away, as he refers to this event following.

II, Chap. i, verse 14. *Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.*

This, as well as the whole text of his letter, does not indicate that he expected to die as a martyr. The calmness with which he refers to his approaching departure seems to suggest that he had attained to an old age, and this we find confirmed by the next verse.

15. *Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.*

This, however, is of little importance to our discussion, except that it shows Peter reached a contented old age.

He seems to have been well acquainted with Paul, and is thoroughly familiar with his doctrines. These he does not approve entirely, and this shows that already a lack of harmony existed among the apostles in regard to the conception of the Spirit of Christ. II, Chap. iii, verse 15. *“And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation ; even as our beloved brother Paul, also according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things ; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.”* He did not wish seriously to object to Paul's theories, because that might be detrimental to the interests of the Church, so he just says sufficient to record that he does not himself accept all these theories.

The four epistles which we have now discussed are undoubted the most important documents concerning the life and works of Christ. We can have no doubt that Peter, John and James, were the real apostles of Christ, and the

authors of the portions of Scripture attributed to them. Acknowledging this we have to admit that in their writings, although their allegiance to Christ is unquestioned, there is no reference to the miracles of Jesus, and no evidence of His divinity. Our review of the Gospel of John, who was probably the same disciple referred to here—will entirely corroborate this.

Now if these four apostles and many others only believed in Christ as a religious reformer, and not as a divinity, why are we called upon to accept Him, upon their evidence as the veritable Son of God? By part of the people of His time, especially the educated class, it should also be remembered, Christ was not ever accepted as a religious teacher and guide.

In the remaining documents to be discussed, it must be observed that the more distant in time and space the authors were related to the original source of their inspirations, the more enigmatical and mysterious is the manner in which the events treated of, are represented.

THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL.

Paul was an important, and without doubt, the most active member of the Church of Christ. He was an ardent defender of his theories and a zealous worker for the faith, and to him foremost of all must be attributed the successful propagation of Christianity. He travelled continually, encouraging and exhorting believers everywhere, and was indefatigable in enforcing his admonitions by writing. Many of his epistles have come down to our own day and from them we obtain valuable glimpses of the condition of the initial Christian Church.

Being a man of energetic habit he was just as zealous in

the promotion of Christ's Church as he was formerly in its persecution. His conversion to Christianity we must ascribe to a pang of conscience which struck him while in the act of persecuting poor and humble Christians. Being on his way to Damascus in pursuit of his mission, a heavy thunder storm, perhaps, overtook him on his way. A fearful flash of lightning near to him, as his own reports suggest, may have terrified him, and becoming conscience-stricken, he believed this natural phenomenon to be an indicator of the wrath of God toward him because of his persecutions of the Christians. He at once became painfully conscious of his shameful conduct, and was converted. He reveals very little about this occurrence himself, but leaves it to Luke, to recount the miraculous manner in which his conversion was brought about.

Acts, Chap. xxii, verse 9. *And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid ; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me.*

Paul having himself, perhaps, labored under the delusion, that the roaring thunder was the voice of God, communicated this to Luke in an ostentatious way, being desirous of representing his conversion as a miraculous act in order to confirm his pretensions to the high office for which he claimed to have been specially chosen by God Himself. But notice how guarded is the statement he makes for his purpose. They who were with him, he says, did not hear the voice of Him that spoke. This seems to be the premature explanation of an expected denial of the occurrence from those who were with him.

And he did not wish, it seems, to give this report of his conversion himself—possibly because he knew that it was not in conformity with the truth—but left it for Luke to do, for whose statement he could not be held responsible.

Another miraculous occurrence happens to Paul, which he does relate, and it bears upon its face a similar purpose to the one just discussed. Paul was familiar with the many fables in circulation regarding the reappearance of Christ

after death before several of His disciples, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, and no doubt thought that he, the most important apostle, ought also to receive some special recognition of Christ. It seemed to be necessary, if he must hold his proper rank among the minor disciples, who had witnessed the spiritual manifestations referred to. So he has a dream or vision, and states it to have been the much desired visitation of Christ to him: 1 Corinthians, Chap. xv, verse 8. "*And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*" How Paul could imagine that such a nonsensical vision could represent Christ, it is difficult to understand. Nobody will dispute that he had such a vision, and that he himself believed it to be as he represented it; but no rational person can accept such a description as applying to Christ.

He very shrewdly does not state on what occasion this happened, why Christ appeared to him, or why He made His appearance in such a nondescript character.

The conversion of Paul must have taken place a considerable time after the death of Christ, because Christianity was spread over Syria, Cilicia, Arabia, and other countries when he commenced his mission against it.

Galatians, Chap. i, verse 17: *Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*

18. *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.*

19. *But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*

20. *Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.*

21. *Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia:*

22. *And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ.*

He then continues: Galatians, Chap. ii, verse 1. *Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.*

Consequently his principal activity must have been about twenty-five to thirty years after the death of Christ. Two points—his adopted character of apostle, and the period of his activity—are of great importance in forming a correct opinion of the motive and the circumstances which governed his career, as there are so many epistles from Paul which are all different in spirit and style. These differences may be attributed to the various circumstances and times at which they were written. It would be difficult, because of this, to present a concise discussion of his writings as a whole, and therefore every epistle is here treated separately, and by this plan the changes which took place in Paul's mind and conduct are more easily considered.

PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

From his introduction we perceive that he calls himself a servant, and a specially selected apostle of Christ or Messias, whose coming had been prophesied in the Old Testament.

Chap. i, verse 1. *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.*

2. (*Which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures,*)

3. *Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.*

Paul was a converted Jew, well educated and thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament. He was convinced that Christ was the promised Messiah, the Son of God and Saviour of the world, but in all other respects he adheres to the old Jewish doctrines and belief.

Chap. iv, verse 1. *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?*

2. *For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.*

3. *For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

4. *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*

5. *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

6. *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.*

7. *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

8. *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

9. *Cometh this Blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

10. *How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

11. *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:*

12. *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*

13. *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

14. *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*

15. *Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.*

16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.*

17. *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many*

nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

18. *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.*

19. *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.*

He does not here contend, however, that the Jews are a divinely selected people, but expressly states that God is equally just to all.

Chap. iii, verse 29. *Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.*

His teachings in the beginning are in accordance with the doctrines of the Old Testament, the God of his belief being the revengeful God of the earlier prophets.

Chap. i, verse 18. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*

Chap. ii, verse 9. *Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.*

He was, when he wrote this letter, evidently as yet unfamiliar with the spirit of the original teachings of Christ, as represented by the former apostles, which were chiefly founded on love, charity, humility, and submission to God's will. This difference in Paul's teachings we must ascribe to his sudden conversion, and to the fact that on account of his conceit he refused to be instructed by the better informed apostles, but commenced and for some time continued to preach in the old Jewish spirit. This, in reality, was the more correct, as the appearance of Christ was founded thereon. He does not speak of any special doctrines of Christ, nor allude to any incident of His wonderful life, or to any of His miracles, but preaches only the God of

Abraham and of the circumcision. He mentions Christ as the Saviour of the world, nevertheless; his theory being, apparently, that the sins of the world, which, according to the Old Testament, had come into the world by the reckless disobedience of one man, had to be redeemed by one other man. Chap. v, verse 19. "*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*"

We must assume that Paul did not believe in any of the miracles attributed to Christ, as he does not refer to them, and that the church of which he was a prominent member was simply reformed Jewish, rather than Christian, as at present understood. Paul professed the Jewish faith, with the addition that the promised Messiah had already arrived in the person of Jesus. He does not state any reasons which might have led him to accept Jesus to be the Messiah. Nevertheless he never saw Christ, and therefore must have accepted Him upon the testimony of others.

Even the resurrection of Christ he finds in conformity with the old doctrines, and upon this accepts it. The spirit of man was to arise after death, and therefore there was nothing specially miraculous about the resurrection of Christ, for he distinctly alleges that Christ did not rise again in the body, but in the spirit only.

Chap. x, verse 6. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;)*

7 *Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)*

Paul here obviously makes a distinction between the spirit of Christ in heaven, and the body which is in the deep. These sentences could not well be explained in a different way, and this view is frequently and substantially confirmed in other of the epistles.

We recognize from his whole epistle to the Romans that he adhered strictly to Old Testament doctrines. Even if, as

is mentioned before, Paul may not have been thoroughly instructed in the special doctrines of Christ, he would nevertheless have known of them, had they received distinct form, for he had been an apostle for several years when he wrote this.

Chap. xv, verse 23. *But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you ;*

24. *Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you.*

We may suggest that Paul knew all about the tale of wonders and miracles which were in circulation about Christ, as in adopting the same method, he refers to mighty signs and wonders experienced by himself.

Chap. xv, verse 19. *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

He may have converted many and have had wonderful success in this respect, as well as in escaping from dangerous situations, all of which he may have fancied were special signs of God's favor. But he always speaks of the miracles that happened to himself in this general way ; he never mentions any special miraculous occurrences, and if any had occurred to him he certainly would have revealed them in order to magnify his own importance.

Paul seems to have been already well known to the prominent believers in Christ living in Rome, though he had not as yet visited that city. He sends his greetings to many, mentioning them by name, (See the end of this epistle.) The name of Lucas, who lived in Rome, does not occur in this list, however, and we must therefore suppose that he had not as yet been converted, or had not attained any prominence as a believer in Christ. Paul mentions a Lucius, who was with him, but this must not be confounded with Lucas, the Evangelist, who was a Roman. Chap. xiv, verse 21. "*Timotheus, my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater my kins-man, salute you.*"

The nature of this letter of Paul gives us a clear idea of his primitive opinions of Christianity, which possesses very different features from those we have received from the other apostles. During his career it will be seen that these opinions undergo a decided change. His writings, too, as we follow up his letters, will show the prominent position he occupied, and the arbitrary manner in which he wielded his authority.

PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS.

BOOK I.

Already, in the earliest stages of Christianity, great diversity of opinion existed in regard to the doctrines upon which this new sect was founded; so much so that Paul deemed it necessary to address to the Corinthians a severe reprimand in regard to these various religious disputes. Corinthians Chap. i, verse 12. "*Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*" This exhortation proves also that there existed no formal unity among the different converts to Christianity. Paul was anxious to effect this, and he endeavors to do so by explaining in the first place the relations of these various sects, one to another. Chap. xiii, verse 12. "*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.*" Chap. xiii, verse 21. "*But now are they many members (of different opinions, of course) yet but one body.*"

Paul's own opinion appears meanwhile to have undergone an entire change since the letter he addressed to the

Romans was written. He no longer reasons in support of the laws of the Old Testament; he discusses only the more reformed ideas of the so-called Christian theory; he seems to be more settled and deliberate in regard to his religious views, and instead of following slavishly the teachings of the older prophets, expresses more distinctly his own opinions. Chap. i, verse 22. "*For the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.*" Chap. ii, verse 4. "*And my speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.*" Chap. ii, verse 6. "*However, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the prince of this world, that came to naught*"

He even represents Christ in an entirely different character. This new idea of Christ which runs through this epistle, is shown in the following: Chap. i, verse 30. "*But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made into wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*" The Greeks, however, like the Jews, seem to have appreciated this grace but little, which induces Paul to state, that the gospel of Christ was thought of. Chap. i, verse 23. "*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.*" This statement of what Christ was held to be among the Jews and Greeks of that time is very plain, and in answer thereto Paul has only to quote that he "preached the Christ crucified." That he preached Christ crucified may be correct, but that seems to be all he has to say in confirmation of the alleged divine mission of Christ. He does make some endeavor to support his theory of Christ's divinity by a reference to His resurrection, but this he explains in so equivocal a manner that it simply furnishes undeniable proof of the resurrection being a matter of doctrine only, and that it never occurred in reality.

The fable of the resurrection had probably found its way among the Corinthians, but with them had been met with considerable distrust and opposition. This led Paul to give an exact explanation as to how this alleged wonderful

occurrence should be understood. Chap. xv, verse 12. *"Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? but if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Ye and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins."* Chap. xv, verse 21. *"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* This repeated explanation must be satisfactory proof that Paul only believed in a spiritual resurrection, because if he really had been convinced of the bodily resurrection of Christ, he would have more plainly stated it, and adduced essential proof in support of it. His whole argument, however, is begging the question. At first he expects us to believe that the dead rise, and consequently that Christ has arisen, and from this argues that Christ was the Messiah, the Son of God, because He rose. If we do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, then Paul's whole argument, according to his own statement, falls to the ground.

Paul's own belief and conviction cannot be accepted as an infallible guide in this matter. Even the Old Testament prophecies to which he refers relative to the coming Messiah cannot be relied upon, except as mere human suggestions. They were written, by men, at a time when there was more cause for superstition, because more ignorance prevailed. But Paul is even unreliable from the variability of his own opinions. First he denounces the bodily resurrection of Christ, and subsequently expresses his strong belief in it. Evidently he was afraid of being suspected of deriding this circulating fable, and he therefore endeavors, in some shape, to justify it, referring to the Old Scripture as

testimony in support of the possibility of such an occurrence.

Chap. xv, verse 3. "*For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received: how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scripture.*"

He does not refrain from referring to Cephas, James, and other five hundred brethren, who are alleged to have seen Christ after His resurrection, although not one of them, in the testimony they have left, makes the slightest reference to their having seen Christ after His supposed resurrection. Chap. xv, verse 5. "*And He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greatest part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that of James, then of all the apostles.*"

We must remember that when Paul refers to Cephas and James in this manner, that this can in no way be considered as their testimony. There might probably have been such rumors current in regard to this divine appearance, and it is probable that Paul knew and availed himself of such rumors, without making himself chargeable with misrepresentation.

Paul then involves the whole matter in still further mystery by relating a most singular vision, or dream, which has been alluded to before. Chap. xv, verse 8. "*And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*" But it seems that his impressions of the visitation that occurred to him, and also of the reappearance of Christ were vague, both of which he endeavors to explain as having been in the Spirit. This view is confirmed in his unmistakable but equivocal definition.

Chap. xv, verse 35. *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*

36. *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.*

37. *And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:*

38. *But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.*

40. *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.*

44. *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

He evidently takes great pains to confirm the theory of Christ's supernatural character, but in his cunningly-divined definitions exhibits great doubt of there being any tangible foundation for such theory.

The Greeks, we must remember, demanded sound proof of the alleged divine mission of Christ, just as we should ask for convincing testimony ourselves. For that purpose Paul cites the story of the resurrection and reappearance of Christ, and subjoins a deliberate explanation to strengthen it in some way. In order to clothe the whole in a more mysterious light, he also represents the apostles as being gifted with miraculous powers. This, however, is merely alluded to, and no special miracles of theirs are mentioned, and it is to be believed, if believed at all, upon his bare suggestion.

Chap. xii, verse 3. *For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit:*

9. *To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;*

10. *To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.*

Then again, Paul is bound to boast of his own importance, and his own miraculous power and wisdom, yet here also he cunningly evades adducing any proof of such supernatural gifts.

Chap. xiii, verse 1. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am becoming as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

2. *And though I have the gift of prophesy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

3. *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

He alludes to his miraculous power, but suggests that to ask for its demonstration would be a tempting of Christ.

Chap. x, verse 9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*

In this we discern evidence of some miraculous act attributed to Christ, but which is mentioned in such a superficial way that it looks as if the writer was afraid to enter into any detail of the circumstances.

Paul was evidently neither of an amiable nor particularly just disposition. He was extremely odious to those who would not submit to his caprices, and did not hesitate to avail himself of devices and means which were at war with candor, reliability and truth. That his hypocrisy and superciliousness were extremely distasteful to ardent and candid believers, we need not question. We can therefore take it for granted, that he had many determined antagonists among the sect of which he was a leader. In one of his exhortations he gives strong evidence of this.

Chap. iv, verse 18. *Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.*

19. *But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.*

21. *What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?*

Throughout the whole of his first epistles to the Corinthians such expressions abound.

Some of his doctrines and opinions are more absurd even than might be expected from such a peculiar character. What, for instance, can be more absurd and groundless than

his aversion to matrimony and to the female sex in general. He seems to consider women as a necessary evil, and one to be avoided if possible.

Chap. vii, verse 1. *Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me : It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

2. *Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband.*

Chap. vii, verse 6. *But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.*

7. *For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.*

8. *I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.*

40. *But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment : and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.*

This ridiculous theory does not say much for the deliberate reflection of Paul. Such a doctrine is not only in direct opposition to the commandments of the Old Testament, but is entirely opposed to the laws of nature and aims of creation, as a strict acceptance of it would soon prove fatal to the human race. His complete aversion to the female sex is evident from the position which he assigns woman in her relation to man, and in the minutely detailed, but ridiculous rules which he lays down in regard to that position. He does not consider her entitled to equal rights, but on the contrary, thinks she ought to be subordinated completely to the will and whim of the man.

Chap. ii, verse 5. *But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head : for that is even all one as if she were shaven.*

6. *For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn : for if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.*

7. *For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God : but the woman is the glory of the man.*

8. *For the man is not of the woman ; but the woman of the man.*

9. *Neither was the man created for the woman : but the woman for the man.*

13. *Judge in yourselves : is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered ?*

14. *Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him ?*

15. *But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her ; for her hair is given her for a covering.*

These, of course, are exclusively Paul's own opinions the reasonableness of which, and especially in regard to the shamefulness of a man's wearing long hair more than a woman, it will be difficult to convince any reasonable mind. These theories may possibly have originated from old Jewish ideas and customs, to which Paul was still attached, but he, in his self-sufficient way, puts them forth as special rules, originated by himself, for the guidance even of the Gentiles.

Paul's tirade against women, taken as a whole, furnishes striking proof that he was totally devoid of the divine passion—love. His character was harsh and imperious, and too inflexible to be influenced by feelings of pure love toward the gentler sex. His haughtiness and his zeal for the mission he had adopted, had suppressed all kindly feelings, and made of him a heartless autocrat, from which commanding position he endeavors to enforce his supremacy by every possible means.

Chap. ix, verse 1. *Am I not an apostle ? am I not free ? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord ? are not ye my work in the Lord ?*

2. *If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you : for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*

In his arrogance he even goes so far as to state that he received from the Lord a communication about the proceedings at the Last Supper.

Chap. xi, verse 23. *For I have received of the Lord that*

which also I deliver unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread :

24. *And when He had given thanks, He brake it, etc.*

We must consider it singular that while Paul should never before mention having had direct communication with the Lord, he should have received this special report from Him, which could easily have been communicated to him by one of the other apostles. We are rather inclined to believe that Paul is guilty of serious prevarication. He may have heard about the Last Supper, and the facts in regard to it, as they are represented by him in his epistle to the Corinthians, but his self-conceit leads him to state, not that he received information of it from one of the apostles or any other human authority, but that the account came to him from the Lord Himself. This suggestion will be accepted more readily when we shall endeavor to show later that the alleged proceedings at this Supper probably never took place; or at least not in the way it is reported by him.

A singular phenomenon, which is worthy of mention here, is that some Christian denominations consider Peter the principal authority of the early Church, and yet adopt the rules and doctrines of Paul, in which the doctrine of celibacy is the prominent feature. Paul was not married, and continually recommended the advantages of a single state, while Peter, also called Cephas, was married, according to Paul's own statement. Chap. ix, verse 5. "*Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas.*"

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

BOOK II.

This epistle is composed in an entirely different spirit from the preceding one, and we cannot fail to perceive in it a subdued condition of mind. Paul had most probably met with some serious difficulties on account of his insolent bearing, and to come into grace again felt obliged to change his policy, endeavoring, by confession, to reconcile those to whom he had given offence.

Chap. ii, verse 1. *But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.*

2. *For if I make you sorry, who is he that maketh me glad.*

5. *But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part, that I may not overcharge you all.*

His imperious mind, however, could not brook submission, and although he expresses regret for his former conduct, he seeks to justify it in a non-committal manner.

Chap. vii, verse 8. *For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.*

Chap. ix, verse 5. *Therefore I thought it right to exhort the brethren.*

Chap. x, verse 2. *But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some.*

8. *For though I should boast somewhat more of our [his own] authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.*

Although he pretends that he does not need to be ashamed of his former conduct, nevertheless he fears that he may

not be able to control his temper when he is with them again, and therefore rather chooses to make his defence in writing. Chap. xiii, verse 10. "*Therefore I will write these things being absent, lest being present I should use harshness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.*"

A character like Paul's is difficult to understand, although not an uncommon one with people of limited intellect, but of great cunning, who unexpectedly or suddenly are placed in a position of power and honor which they wish to have recognized and thoroughly respected. Not being able to command the desired admiration, they seek to inculcate it by force or by trickery, through which very means their superficial character becomes apparent and by degrees causes their position to grow precarious, if not wholly untenable.

Though Paul confesses his faulty conduct, and pretends to assume an humble attitude, he cannot long keep up this hypocritical demeanor without showing something of his true colors. He calls to mind, in an exalted style, who he is, and what he has done and suffered for the sake of Christ.

Chap. i, verse 8. *For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.*

9. *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:*

10. *Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.*

Chap. ix, verse 22. *Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.*

23. *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.* .

24. *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one,*

25. *Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep ;*

26. *In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ;*

27. *In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

We cannot fail to observe his great tendency to boasting. His perils on the water he repeats three times, although he never travelled further than to Rome, of which voyage Luke, in the Acts, gives an explicit description. Then his perils among robbers, in the wilderness, among wild beasts, in the city, and from false brethren are narrated with great ado. All his weariness and painfulness, his watchings, his fastings, his nakedness, his exposure to the cold weather, are all set forth as if they were something terrible. We must confess that he has at least done his utmost in the illustration of his suffering.

As an instance of the terrible dangers through which he passed he mentions one occurrence which to him seemed of such actual importance as to call for a detailed explanation.

Chap. 11, verse 32. *In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me ;*

33. *And through a window in a basket, was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.*

Nevertheless he did not wish the glory of himself, but hypocrite like, to figure only as the very humble apostle.

30. *If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.*

Paul, no doubt, met with some hardships, but that he exaggerated his sufferings at times in the most extravagant manner, is equally evident. A good example of this is found in Chap. xv, verse 32. *"If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus." All*

that he means by this is probably that he met with strong opposition in his preaching, but he states it in this extravagant language in order to convey an idea of his personal heroism. He is cognizant of his boastings, yet in his conceit cautions them lest they may consider him a fool, and to impress them otherwise writes :

Chap. 11, verse 16. *I say again, Let no man think me a fool : if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.*

Chap. 12, verse 11. *I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me : for I ought to have been commended of you ; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.*

He is well aware that his sharp conduct will give rise to violent quarrels and slander, and that similar troubles to those he apparently experienced before, would be in store for him, so he exhorts them beforehand.

Chap. xii, verse 20. *For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not : lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.*

In his self-conceit, how mean he acts towards his true helper Titus, whom he jealously suspects of having found higher grace with the Corinthians than he himself.

Chap. xii, verse 18. *I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you ? walked we not in the same spirit ? walked we not in the same steps ?*

He also refers in a vague manner to some one who glories in himself, and of whom also he is jealous. While he first states that it is not proper for himself to glory, yet as he believes that he also will receive a special revelation from the Lord at some time, he refers to the exaltation of this other preacher.

Chap. xii, verse 1. *It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.*

2. *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell ; or whether out of the*

body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3. *And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)*

4. *How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

5. *Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.*

This man to whom he refers we may presume to be John, because Paul would hardly have recognized this superior power of revelation in any but one of the alleged disciples to whom, at all events, he had to consider himself inferior. To any other he would surely not have made such a concession, and as we have evidence of John's highly exalted character in his revelations, which Paul refers to, we can have no doubt that it is he to whom Paul here refers, and whom he really believes to be inspired with the Spirit of God. But Paul evidently does not wish to mention the name of any apostle gifted with superior power to himself as it might diminish his own importance. He only refers to it in case the exalted revelations of John should become known to the Corinthians, and giving it as an excuse for not glorifying himself, that he would also come to such divine revelations. He even gives a special reason why he does not glorify himself, taking particular care to mention that he has abundant cause for doing so. He had besought the Lord thrice, he said, that he should not become exalted beyond measure.

Chap. xii, verse 7. *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

3. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

This evidently was to serve as an excuse why he did not glory in revelations, which he imagined everybody would expect from him in justification of his high office. To con-

firm his forbearance still more, he states that the Lord had especially spoken to him, and consoled him with the divine opinion, that he had no need of any special revelations; that his personal influence was strong enough without them.

Chap. xii, verse 9. *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Paul also testifies that Christ had been rich, which differs to some extent from other reports of His condition. He was, as we read, the son of a carpenter and as this might have been a profitable pursuit in those days Paul is probably correct.

Chap. viii, verse 9. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

Paul's letter to the Galatians, written from Rome, as is stated at the end, must have been issued many years after that to the Romans, and probably a considerable time subsequent to those to the Corinthians, because many years of his activity passed before his first visit there.

We have again to record a considerable change of opinion in Paul's writing, a fact which he himself admits to the Galatians. Chap. iv, verse 13. "*You know how through infirmities of the flesh I preached the gospel to you at first.*" In his letter to the Romans he adhered to the old Jewish laws and doctrine, but in after years he advocated an entirely different religious theory, which is wholly at variance with Jewish principles. He even goes so far as to call the old

law a curse. Chap. iii, verse 13. "*Christ had redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone that hanged on a tree.*"

Chap. iii, verse 24. *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

Chap. iv, verse 15. *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

This extreme change of mind was brought about partly by his aversion to the Jews, who had, as will be shown later, denounced his overbearing conduct, and caused him much trouble; and partly by the circumstances by which he was surrounded in his principal sphere of activity—among the heathens and Gentiles. The Greeks and Romans not being accustomed to circumcision, naturally objected to such a nonsensical ceremony, so that the inculcation would have been a great hindrance to the successful propagation of the gospel of Christ. Circumcision, as a fundamental doctrine, had therefore to be abandoned. The Jewish Christians, on account of their descent and circumcision, considered themselves to be of superior grace, and Paul was necessarily called upon to maintain the equal religious qualifications of the Greeks and Romans. This he does in a very ingenious manner by the introduction of reformed religious theories. In his wanton zeal for these, he goes so far as to rebuke Peter severely for his partiality to his own theories.

Chap. ii, verse 11. *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

12. *For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*

This arrogance of Paul in daring to oppose even Peter, the real apostle of Christ, originated in his presumption that he was converted directly by the will of God, and not

through the influence of other men, and which he desires to be known. Chap. i, verse 1. "*Paul an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.*" Chap. i, verse 12. "*For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" That this was acknowledged, as he suggests by Peter and others, he takes the pains to formally affirm.

Chap. ii, verse 9. *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship.*

We must here especially notice that neither Paul nor any of the former authors, refer to any other apostles of Christ except Cephas, James and John, and considering the dubious relation of John to Christ during the lifetime of the latter, we must be inclined to believe that these three were the only so-called disciples or true followers of Christ. Sometimes "James, the Lord's brother" is mentioned, and he seems to have been in accord with the apostles, but not therefore one himself. This James must not be confounded with the one to whom Jude refers. Jude, Chap. i, verse 1. "*Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.*" If this James had been the brother of Christ, Jude must also have been His brother, and he would have stated so.

That Paul experienced a good deal of disappointment among the Galatians, and even among his own converts, who again fell off on account, very probably, of his arrogance, and that also opposing sects and adherents of apostate denominations were in existence, appears from his own statement.

Chap. i, verse 6. *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel :*

7. *Which is not another ; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

That he had been as severe in the persecution of the

Christians, as he was later in the promotion of their cause, is sufficiently shown by his own words.

Chap. i, verse 13. *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.*

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, represents himself as an entirely different man, from the idea of himself he has previously conveyed, and we might almost believe that this letter was written by anyone but himself. All at once he seems to have become gentle and humble in his admonishments, and in addressing the Ephesians he no longer boasts of being independent of men, but only claims to be an apostle of Christ by the will of God. Ephesians, Chap. i, verse 1. "*Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the Saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.*"

His whole letter is full of love and humility ; he affects to recognize his own insignificance, and to desire to be on terms of equality with his fellow-believers.

Chap. i, verse 15. *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints.*

Chap. ii, verse 4. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us,*

5. *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved ;)*

6. *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

He even professes to be less than any of the saints, and this he appears to really mean, as he does not afterwards modify this open confession.

Chap. iii, verse 8. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

Age, persecution and long imprisonment, have probably broken his fierce spirit and energy, but even in his humility he cannot refrain from his old habit of boasting, but in humility. Chap. iii, verse 1. *"For this cause. I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. Chap. iv, verse 1. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord beseech that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.*

He is depressed in spirit, and is resigned to die. His exalted position no longer blinds him, and he is at last filled with the real spirit of Christian love.

Chap. iv, verse 12. *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ :*

13. *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the statute of the fulness of Christ :*

32. *And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Chap. v, verse 1. *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children ;*

2. *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.*

Chap. vi, verse 10. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.*

He at length ceases to boast of his sufferings, and expresses a kind hope that his followers will not be troubled about him. Chap. iii, verse 13. *"Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."*

This remarkable change of mind could only have occurred through grave circumstances, and we can have no doubt that these were the persecutions and temptations he

experienced, that he recommends the Ephesians to guard against.

Chap. vi, verse 11. *Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

12. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

Such obstinacy had brought him to acknowledge his own demerits and for once made him a real humble servant of Christ. Chap. iii, verse 2. *"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given to me to you-ward."*

Here we must allude to the strange fact that Paul does not refer to any of the miracles attributed to Christ, although he speaks of the ascent of Christ to heaven as a matter of fact; while he has before explained that the incident was to be understood in its figurative sense only. Chap. iv, verse 8. *"Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men."*

We may consider this as an effort to have the resurrection of Christ established as a fact, so that it might be accepted as an evidence of His divine character. Paul goes on to reason that although Christ was first buried, nevertheless He ascended, but how, he does not state. Chap. iv, verse 9. *"Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth."* Then he adds, as further testimony, that Christ imparted to His apostles various extraordinary powers before He had arisen. Chap. iv, verse 11. *"And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."*

We may suggest that Paul did not dare to speak of more striking miracles to the Ephesians, for fear of arousing their suspicion and distrust; but mystery had it to be.

Chap. iii, verse 3. *How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,*

4. *Whereby, when ye read, ye made understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.)*

He here refers to a former letter to them, in which he refers to some mysteries appertaining to himself. This letter, however, appears to have been lost, but since we have ample accounts of Paul, we need not regret its loss. Perhaps the Ephesians did not think much of these mysterious revelations and laid the letter aside.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

Paul's letter to the Philippians was probably written some time after that to the Ephesians. It gives distinct evidence of his former spirit of imposition and haughtiness. After being liberated from his long imprisonment in consequence of a heroic defence, he met with great success in his advocacy of the Christian cause, even some of Cæsar's household being converted.

Chap. i, verse 12. *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel ;*

13. *So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places.*

Chap. iv, verse 22. *All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household.*

This had inspired him with new courage, and revived his conceit and pride of his elevated position. Among other things to his own praise he alludes to his high descent.

Chap. i, verse 1. *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.*

Chap. iii, verse 4. *Though I might also have confidence*

in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he may trust in the flesh, I more.

5. *Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;*

6. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

During the hard pressure that was brought to bear on him in his persecution, and which he probably expected to result fatally, he seems to have made himself familiar with the idea of death, and thus refers to it in a heroical spirit.

Chap. i, verse 21. *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

22. *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not.*

22. *For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*

As he had escaped unharmed, with enhanced reputation, he was unable to conceal his consciousness of his own importance and significance.

Chap. i, verse 20. *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.*

Chap. iii, verse 14. *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

17. *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

On account of his ambition and restless activity, although he was generally disliked, and even feared, he affected more than any of the other apostles; and his continuous exhortations through letters and special messengers, as mentioned here and in other places, enabled him to keep posted and in close connection with his adherents.

Chap. ii, verse 25. *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*

His vanity in return, is vastly flattered by any attention shown to him, even to such a degree that he believes such attentions to him are pleasing to God.

Chap. iv, verse 10. *But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again ; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am to consent.*

Chap. iv, verse 17. *Not because I desire a gift : but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*

18. *But I have all and abound : I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.*

We may here also suggest that as Paul in later stages had changed his conduct materially, the general disposition toward him had improvd also, and at last his followers showed the affectionate devotion to him for which he had eagerly longed.

Although in this letter, only few incidents furnish occasion for discussion, nevertheless, they are sufficient to prove his hypocritical conduct. While to the Gentiles he simulates aversion to the Jews, in his address to the latter, he prides himself upon being prominent among them.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

This letter of Paul appears to have followed in regular order those we have already considered, because herein, for the first time, we find mention made of Luke the physician. Chap. iv, verse 14. *" Luke the beloved physician, and Demas greet you."* As Paul always mentions those who are especially dear to him, and as he did not mention Luke's name before, we may presume that it was at about this

time that the friendship between them first began.

This marked attention of Paul towards Luke we may consider as proof of the latter's unquestionable allegiance to the cause of Christ and devotedness to Paul, as nothing less could have evoked from Paul such affectionate expressions.

Luke was not one of the circumcised, (those being specially mentioned) but a Gentile, and as he was by profession a physician, in all probability he was a permanent resident of Rome.

Chap. iv, verse 10. *Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you receive him;)*

11. *And Jesus which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision.*

We here also find reference made to Marcus or Mark, who was a sister's son of Barnabas, who many years before accompanied Paul and Titus to Jerusalem. Galatians, Chap. ii, verse 1. "*Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.*" Mark does not seem to have occupied a very prominent position, as he is only referred to as a fellow-worker or assistant of Paul. Chap. iv, verse 2. "*These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.*"

In this letter, also, we have to notice that Paul entirely omits mention of any supernatural incidents in connection with Christ, and only refers to His death on the Cross, which indicates that he knows of the real occurrence, but will not give his authority to the fables.

Chap. ix, verse 20. *And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself;*

Chap. ii, verse 14. *Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.*

That the name Jesus was quite common, is obvious from the frequency with which it occurs in the Scriptures, ap

plied to different individuals. The name of a prominent follower of Paul, as we find in this letter, was Jesus the Just.

In regard to the doctrine of Paul we must again notice a considerable change. Here he seems to have more fully developed and perfected his theory.

Chap. i, verse 10. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

This whole epistle is written in the same moderate vein, and indicates the gradual development of mind in a more sincere direction.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

BOOK I.

Paul, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, appears to be very melancholy and humble. He avoids all startling remarks, and places himself on an equal footing with his fellow-workers. Chap. i, verse 1. "*Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians.*" He even beseeches them to recognize his fellow-workers, who, after all, were their superiors. Chap. v, verse 12. "*And we beseech you brethren to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord.*" He does not exhort them directly, because he was perhaps afraid of exciting their displeasure, but cunningly urges them, to warn others who are unruly, and to comfort those who are in need.

Chap. v, verse 14. *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.*

His independence of conduct has entirely disappeared ;

he humbly acknowledges this grace and requests them to pray for him. Chap. v, verse 25. "*Brethren, pray for us.*"

He had most probably experienced violent opposition from them on account of his importunity, and in consequence, was very moderate in his language. He admits the severity of his conduct toward them, but maintains his position and adds that although he had suffered much at Philippi on this account, he was bold to speak the word to them, even in spite of all the contention which it aroused against him.

Chap. ii, verse 2. *But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.*

He considered himself justified in doing so, because, in his opinion, it was the word of God he spoke.

Chap. ii, verse 3. *For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:*

4. *But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak: not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*

He considers that he treated them gently, and states that his exhortations were simply for their own good, even as a mother chastiseth her children.

Chap. ii, verse 7. *But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.*

How could they have misconstrued his intentions, he asks, when they themselves had witnessed how blamelessly he had behaved, and how good he really was?

Chap. ii, verse 10. *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.*

Evidently he understood well how to flatter them into recognition.

Chap. i, verse 8. *For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in*

every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad ; so that we need not to speak any thing.

Paul, on his visit to them, probably had intended to display his supremacy, and to scold them into a proper sense of his superiority. He found, however, that they were not disposed to submit to his parental corrections, and, after he had left them, he dispatched Timothy to smooth over any soreness that his conduct had caused.

Chap. iii, verse 4. *For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation ; even as it came to pass, and ye know.*

5. *For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.*

6. *But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you.*

This letter gives us also clear evidences of Paul's cunning and pliable character. Wherever he found that he could not enforce his supremacy, he adopted milder means to attain his object.

This letter, sent from Athens, was most probably written before he had been in Rome, from where he wrote his epistles to the Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians, and Galatians, and although his discourse is here already of a more reformed character, age and experience had not as yet softened his character to the toleration which is found in his later writings.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

BOOK II.

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians contains but few remarkable incidents or matters of importance, except that he gives a fair presentation of his opinion about Heaven, the fate of the unbelievers, and the works of the imagined Satan, or the evil spirit.

Chap. i, verse 7. *And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,*

8. *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ;*

9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.*

Chap. ii, verse 8. *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming :*

9. *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders.*

His expressions about the vengeance of God are very exalted, and the decided terms in which he expresses his opinion upon this point, are entirely in conformity with the ruggedness of his character. He assumes the position of an incontrovertible authority, and fancies his own testimony to be of the highest value. He was convinced that he revealed the truth, and maintains that in so much as his revelations were believed in, the Lord would be glorified ; those who did not believe in them would be punished with everlasting destruction.

Chap. i, verse 9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting*

destruction from the presence of our Lord, or from the glory of His power.

10. *When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, (because our testimony among you was believed,) in that day.*

Chap. ii, verse 12. *That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Satan, according to his ideas, is an evil spirit who seems to enjoy his existence very much, and does not care about God or Christ, except that he tries to trouble them as much as possible. Not only was Satan invested with supernatural powers, but his followers also were able to work miracles.

Chap. ii, verse 9. *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all powers and signs and lying wonders.*

19. *And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

He even suggests that God is accessory to the evil works of Satan.

Chap. ii, verse 11. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.*

These paragraphs must be satisfactory proof of Paul's superstitious nature, and even though he may have found many adherents to his doctrines, this is no proof that they were in conformity with the teachings of Christ. Paul had never seen Christ; he was an apostle only by his own election and conceit. The power he received was self-assumed, and in regard to his theories, we have no foundation on which to refer them to Christ, beyond his own words.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

BOOK I.

The most interesting documents we have from Paul are his letters to Timothy. Above all, we must take well into consideration the intimate relations which existed between these two, and that Timothy, but a young man, was a true and obedient servant of Paul.

Chap. iv, verse 12. *Let no man despise thy youth: but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

His invariable trust in Paul's teachings and commands, stimulated Paul's attachment to him. He loves Timothy very much, and calls him his dearly beloved son.

Chap. i, verse 2. *Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

II Timothy, Chap. i, verse 2. *To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

He was Paul's pet protege, and was cared for by him with parental affection.

Chap. v, verse 23. *Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.*

Paul is thoroughly familiar with the disposition of Timothy, and is aware that the latter will bear with his assumed airs of supremacy. Paul, therefore, in his communications to Timothy, assumes his full dignity and superiority as an apostle by the command of God.

Chap. i, verse 10. *Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.*

This he desires to impress sincerely upon Timothy.

Chap. i, verse 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

However, like a man who has no confidence in his own statements, but still is desirous of impressing them upon others, he comments upon his own suggestions.

Chap. ii, verse 7. *I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not; a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.*

Paul's earnest exhortation to Timothy to oppose those who would promote other doctrines, must be proof that other antagonistic doctrines were prevalent, even among the believers.

Chap. i, verse 3. *As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.*

He also cautions him not to give heed to the endless genealogies and fables which were current about Christ, characterizing them old wives' fables.

Chap. i, verse 4. *Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.*

Chap. iv, verse 7. *But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.*

Paul is thoroughly aware of the existence of such fables and the contentions concerning them, and is afraid that Timothy, as a prominent teacher of the Church, will be interrogated as to their correctness and involved in discussions. He therefore advises him to avoid such questions. Paul evidently did not believe in them himself, and was, therefore, unwilling to dupe his faithful helper; yet still he was unwilling that they should be stoutly denied, as to do so might detract from the glorification of Christ and injure the Church. He earnestly exhorts Timothy to stand firmly by his trust, and not to be affected by these discussions.

Chap. vi, verse 20. *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.*

Paul was apprehensive of any conflict with science in regard to these fables, and so does his best to avoid it. This proves the equivocal character of his theories! The truth always speaks for itself, and needs no concealment.

He deems it necessary to impress upon Timothy the sincerity of the cause, as an answer to all doubts in regard to the mysteries.

Chap. iii, verse 16. *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

We cannot fail to observe how cleverly Paul attempts to extricate himself out of the prevailing difficulties, without committing himself on either side. His arguments are very suggestive, and his testimony rather dubious. When he says, "believed on in the world," we cannot but consider this most equivocal, as the believers were not numerous, and many of those who had been converted, subsequently deserted their profession. Of this we have ample evidence in several places.

Chap. i, verse 19. *Holding faith, and a good conscience: which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck:*

20. *Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

Paul's opinion in regard to matrimony also underwent a change, as a consequence of his development of mind; and while he formerly advocated that it was better for man to cling to the single state, he now recommends that Bishops should be married, and even going so far as to denounce the forbidding of marriage as a doctrine of the devil.

Chap. iii, verse 2. *A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.*

Chap. iv, verse 1. *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*

Verse 2. *Speaking lies in hypocrisy ; having their conscience seared with a hot iron ;*

3. *Forbidden to marry.*

His own aversion to the female sex is evident however, from his many invidious and disgraceful expressions about them, and especially as to widows, as well as in regard to the subordinate position he believes that women ought generally to occupy.

Chap. ii, verse 12. *But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*

Chap. v, verse 11. *But the younger widows refuse : for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry ;*

12. *Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.*

13. *And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house ; and not only idlers but tattlers also, and busy bodies speaking things which they ought not.*

Chap. v, verse 14. *I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.*

He does not consider them fitted for companions, but only as a sort of slaves who are deserving of little consideration. Neither does he recognize the genuine nature of the true woman ; that she is disposed to be refined and accomplished, and destined to exercise the greatest influence on the moral and spiritual welfare of humanity. To him they are only the subordinate and inferior sex, condemned from the beginning. This he attempts to prove by citing the old ridiculous fable of Adam and Eve.

Chap. ii, verse 13. *For Adam was first formed, then Eve.*

14. *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*

Though of prominent descent, according to his own suggestion, what delicacy or refinement can he have possessed, when he indulges in such disgraceful expressions as these.

Chap. i, verse 9, "*Knowing this that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient; for the ungodly and for sinners, for ungodly and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.*"

This epistle gives us an undisguised illustration of Paul's low and hypocritical character, and his acute skill in evading all disagreeable opposition.

The letter was written from Laodicea, and most probably before Paul had been in Rome, as it is stated in the beginning of the letter that Timothy was still very young. Paul did not go to Rome until during his later years, and from there he wrote his second letter to Timothy when the latter was a bishop of the Church at Ephesus.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

BOOK II.

Paul's attachment to Timothy is shown in this letter to be undiminished, and finds expression in exalted praise of him.

II Timothy, Chap. i, verse 3. *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;*

4. *Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;*

5. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.*

Here, again, we observe the unfeigned character of Paul, who, like all hypocrites, is profuse in praise for those who are firmly devoted to him, and as extremely indignant to those who are opposed. He takes the opportunity of drawing attention to the terrible sufferings which he has endured, and of glorifying himself before his humble followers.

Chap. i, verse 3. *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;*

12. *For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.*

Chap. ii, verse 9. *Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.*

10. *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

On this account he exhorts Timothy to be steadfast in faith through suffering, holding before himself the good Paul for an example.

Chap. ii, verse 1. *Thou therefore, my son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

Chap. iii, verse 10. *But thou has fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience.*

11. *Persecution, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconia, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but of them all the Lord delivered me.*

Paul, here, must be taken as referring more particularly to his persecutions at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. His sufferings at Rome, from where he writes this, could not have been so very severe, as, from the fact of their having occurred so recently, he would otherwise have described them in detail.

That sensible people, in general, shall become indignant

at such importunate self-laudatory insinuations, and should from this cause refuse to accept his ministrations, is not to be wondered at. Chap. i, verse 15. "*This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me ; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*" Chap. iv, verse 4. "*Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil ; the Lord reward him according to his works.*" In another place he refers to two others of his opponents, and to their pernicious influence. Chap. ii, verse 17. "*And this word will eat as doth a canker : of whom is Hymenæus and Phyletus.*"

Paul's conduct alone, we may suggest, though obnoxious to many, could not have caused the numerous desertions from the ranks of his followers, of which we read, because real honest faith would not be shaken by reason of the offensive behaviour of one man. Sincere reflection alone upon the gospel teachings must have caused those who were not already prejudiced to be filled with doubt. Chap. ii, verse 18. "*Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is passed already ; and overthrow the faith of some.*" Paul steadfastly maintains the doctrine he has adopted, and endeavors to enforce it by cunning suggestion of the alleged antecedents of Christ ; however cautious of the danger of the free discussion of such subjects. He states that Christ is descended from the seed of David, but having nothing to support such a theory, warns Timothy not to argue the genealogical question, neither the theory of resurrection. Chap. ii, verse 8. "*Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead, according to my gospel.*" Verse 16. "*But shun profane and vain babblings ; for they will increase unto more ungodliness.*" Verse 23. "*But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.*" Here Paul quotes his own gospel as being the only reliable authority on such matters.

It appears that while Paul was at Rome, the distrust and dissension must have been general, even among his own followers, as, at his defence before Nero, no one dared to

support his cause. Chap. iv, verse 16. "*At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.*"

Paul's defence, no doubt, was a great one, as it is proved that he was ready in argument as in boasting.

Verse 17. *Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.*

He had been victorious in the defence of his cause; he had fulfilled his course, and was ready to die. He was, at this time, to judge from the following sentence, already aged.

Chap. iv, verse 6. *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

7. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*

This is in entire consonance with his general tone, and is intended only to add to the sum of his glorious deeds. Although he states that he has finished his course, he evidently expects to continue his ministry, and in an unconcerned way advises Timothy concerning certain small items.

Chap. iv, verse 11. *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable for the ministry.*

12. *And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.*

13. *The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchment.*

He finally boasts of what God will do for him, the greatest of the apostles. Verse 18. "*And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever.*"

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO TITUS.

But few remarkable incidents are mentioned in Paul's letter to Titus, his trusted companion, and one of his earliest fellow-workers. Galatians, Chap. ii, verse 1. "*Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.*"

Titus was, perhaps, of about the same age as Paul, and having had some experience as a Christian teacher, and possessing an independent judgment, was treated more deferentially by Paul. In the first place we notice that Paul does not commence his epistle to him by a reference to his alleged prominent position.

Chap. i, verse 1, *Paul a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.*

He claims, however, some authority over Titus, as he had ordained him to be a bishop. In that relation he takes the liberty of advising him as to his conduct.

4. *To Titus mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

5. *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.*

7. *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*

8. *But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.*

That he had more confidence in the ability of Titus than of Timothy, we may observe from the rigorous course which he recommends him to take in promulgating the faith.

Chap. i, verse 11. *Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.*

His hypocrisy, we must readily observe, from his conduct towards Titus, who was a Greek, Galatians, Chap. ii, verse 3. "*But neither Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.*" To whom he tries to show his attachment by speaking in terms of detestable reproach about his own people, the Jews.

Chap. i, verse 10. *For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision.*

12. *One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.*

13. *This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.*

He even cautions him in reference to the fables about Christ, which he denounces as Jewish fables.

Verse 14. "*Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.*"

That these "fables" could refer only to those regarding Christ, must be plain, as no other could interfere with Paul's idea of Christ and his mission, the "Jewish fables" of the Old Testament being accepted by him.

Chap. iii, verse 8 *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.*

They could be none other than those relating to Christ's life and miracles, and that they must have been the cause of great discussion and contention, is evident from the earnest way in which Titus is cautioned to avoid them. Chap. iii, verse 9. "*But avoid foolish questions and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.*"

There were numbers, as we know, who for various reasons, left the church, which was in course of foundation by Paul and the apostles, and that they were those of the educated class, we find ample proof everywhere. Their sound reasoning against the fabulous gospel teachings vexed Paul greatly. His spiteful feeling, in consequence, toward Zenas the lawyer, and Apollos is shown in

Chap. iii, verse 13. *Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos*

on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

Apollos most probably is the same to whom Luke refers in his Acts, Chap. xviii, verse 24, and Paul formerly spoke well of, and who, in fact, previously was a prominent follower of John the Baptist, 1 Corinthians, Chap. i, verse 12. "*Now this I say, that every one of you saith—I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.*"

There can be no doubt that the gospel of an almighty and single God, with Jesus Christ as a Saviour and Mediator, as variously advocated by the apostles, soon gained ground among the Gentiles; but it is also certain that the fables concerning Christ, subsequently caused great dissension. Paul considered these fables in a manner necessary to confirm the divine character of Christ, as all the prophets of earlier days had left their record of miracles wrought by them. therefore, whether he believed in them or not, he does not dispute them. In fact, he does not believe in them; he is painfully aware of their doubtful character. He dare not dispute them, for fear of losing a large number of his followers; he dare not attempt to prove their probability, for fear of establishing the contrary. Therefore, he cunningly cautions the preachers working with him, to avoid such questions. To Titus he says, in regard to them:

Chap. i, verse 15. *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*

If miracles had really taken place, there would have been no need to conceal them; on the contrary, it would have been advantageous to reveal and explain them.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

Philemon seems to have been a prominent and most dignified apostle of the gospel, whom Paul in consequence

addresses in moderate language, and toward whom he is careful to avoid any show of authority or superiority.

Chap. i, verse 1. *Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-laborer,*

2. *And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house :*

He expresses his sincere attachment to Philemon by a common phrase of his, that he never forgets him in his prayers.

Verse 4. *I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers.*

He is loud in his praise of Philemon's merits, and his epistle is full of adulation.

Verse 6. *That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.*

7. *For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.*

Paul wishes, however, to draw some attention to his own high position after all, and as Philemon was one of his own converts, he flatters himself that in this instance he is entitled to a mention of it.

Verse 8. *Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient.*

9. *Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee.*

19. *I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it : albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.*

This may be going too far, so as he desires to retain the good-will of Philemon, he flatters him by stating that he would be gratified if Philemon would count him a partner.

Verse 17. *If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.*

This letter seems to have been written to Philemon for the special purpose of reconciling him with Onesimus, who appears to have at one time excited Philemon's displeasure.

Verse 10. *I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds :*

11. *Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me :*

12. *Whom I have sent again : thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels.*

18. *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.*

This young man probably had become very dear to Paul, and was perhaps a near relative of Philemon, and to reconcile them was Paul's special object. The letter itself must have been written on one of Paul's later visits to Rome, as he refers to Demas, who was then still one of their allies, and to Luke, who had by this time become somewhat prominent. Verse 23. "*There salute thee, Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus ; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-laborers.*"

At this time Paul was well on in years, which Philemon must have known. Verse 9. "*Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ.*"

Mark and Luke, whom he mentions here as his fellow-laborers, we must suppose to have been much younger, and both, we may suggest—as the time of this writing was about forty years after Christ's birth—were born several years after Christ's crucifixion. This fact has to be taken into consideration in reviewing their evangelisms.

COMMENTS ON PAUL.

From the many epistolary documents we have from Paul, we are enabled to form a decided opinion of his character, ability and position, and his particular religious convictions. We can have no doubt, after a consideration of these epistles, that he was a believer in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and was convinced that he had been converted by a miracle, and designed by God to be a special apostle of Jesus Christ. In this high mission he was most energetic and bold, but his unrestrainable temper and haughtiness, together with the peculiar idiosyncracies he exhibited, largely frustrated the success which his restless activity and unquestioned ability would otherwise have accomplished.

The most striking point in his writings, as has before been pointed out, is the absence of all reference to Christ's miracles. Paul was most serious in his glorification of Christ, yet all the alleged incidents that tend to support this glorification, he wilfully ignores. His explanation of how the resurrection of Christ should be understood, together with his repeated caution against the acceptance of fables and genealogies concerning Him, must be sufficient proof, therefore, that no supernatural acts were ever performed by Christ, and that the wonders attributed to Him were only the common talk of the ignorant and superstitious, to which the educated men, such as Paul, attached no importance and gave no credence.

In regard to Paul's doctrines, there is little evidence of any sudden inspiration. There is nothing original about them. They were developed, as his writings show, by de-

grees. Many people during the time of his apostleship deserted Paul on account of his teachings, therefore we cannot accept him as an undeniable gospel authority, but must simply acknowledge him to be a man who strenuously, and to some extent successfully, advocated the doctrines he believed in, the correctness of which, however, there is nothing to show. That Christ actually lived, and was a spiritual teacher, or prophet, so-called, there is no doubt, but there were many other prophets in those days. The cause of the primary success of the Christian Church was not the doctrine of Christ, but the revelation of a single and almighty God, among the Gentiles

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

This document, which was written by Luke, gives us a very interesting account of some acts of the apostles. But before we enter into a discussion of them, let us first consider who the narrator was, the circumstances which surrounded him, and the sources from which he obtained his information.

Luke was a physician at Rome, of Romish descent, and had not been circumcised. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians (Chap. iv, verse 11) mentions those "of the circumcision" who were with him in Rome, and in this list Luke is not included. Luke must have been a convert of later date, for Paul does not mention his name in his letters from Rome to Timothy, the Philippians, the Ephesians, or the Galatians, which were written during his first sojourn there, while in the letters written during his second and third visits he mentions Luke's name with much affection. Owing to the character of his pursuit, Luke could not travel as much as the other apostles, but had to remain at home, where he had his circle of friends and clients, and for this reason we only hear about him through Paul from Rome. He once made a trip to Jerusalem however, with Paul, which must have occurred after Paul's second or third visit to Rome.

Paul was sincerely attached to Luke, which may be observed from the tender expressions he uses about him. Luke was an ardent Christian and sincerely devoted to

Paul. This latter trait does not say much for the vigor of his mind, as we know Paul too well, to suppose that those who could suffer his extravagances and feel attachment for such a character, could be anything but weak, credulous and subordinate in their nature. Demas, Alexander, Zenas, Apollos, and others, who probably were of superior mind, could not agree with him, and therefore deserted his cause.

Luke was most probably an inoffensive and inexperienced young man, who had unconditionally embraced the new gospel. On his journey with Paul through Greece and Crete to Jerusalem, he probably learned many of those fables which were then in circulation concerning Christ. They were communicated to him, in all sincerity by simple-minded Christians, and he could therefore scarcely doubt their authenticity. It was the policy of Paul, as we know, not to deny these fables, but only to caution his disciples not to discuss them. It is scarcely to be wondered at, therefore, that Luke should accept a number of these current stories, having Christ's glorification for their special object. During his stay in Jerusalem, only important matters concerning the Church might have been discussed, and the question of miracles, perhaps, were never thought or spoken of among the brethren. Neither would Luke inquire about them, being a new convert, for fear of appearing to be doubtful and distrusting. According to his own report of the visit, there were few of the adherents of the new doctrines left at Jerusalem, and these lived in the utmost retirement. Peter, James, John, Jude, and other prominent apostles resided in other countries, and it was probably not safe for them to stay at Jerusalem for any length of time. Thus Luke would have little chance of discussing the miracles of which he had heard, even had he felt disposed to do so.

The time when Luke wrote his gospel, and shortly afterwards the Acts, must have been a long time subsequent to his visit to Jerusalem, and at least fifty years after the death of Christ. We may fairly assume, too, that it was after the

death of Paul they were written, as, after what he says in regard to fables and genealogies, it is scarcely likely that he would have countenanced Luke, with whose doings he was well acquainted during life—in recording such things. On the other hand, we may suggest that Luke, being relieved by the death of Paul from the pressure which restricted him to secrecy on such matters, gathered all these fables, in his zeal that all which was known of Christ should be recorded and preserved, and together with the Acts of the Apostles, systemized them according to his best judgment. This he did alone, or perhaps assisted by his fellow believers.

We cannot insist, however, that Luke wilfully intended to deceive, or to misrepresent the life and actions of Christ and the apostles by his statements. He may have himself believed the stories he tells about them. His motive in writing the Acts of the Apostles—which can scarcely be so entitled, as only a few of the acts of some apostles are given—may probably have been to bring himself into prominence, and to relate his experiences during his trip to Jerusalem. His work, itself, seems to be divided into two distinct parts. The first division, extending to chapter xx, verse 5, being founded on communications and rumors, and the remainder being devoted to an account of his own experience in connection with Paul.

The first division may again be divided up to the thirteenth chapter, being exclusively devoted to the acts of some of the original apostles and chief dignitaries; which, being the more distant in the time of occurrence, are founded on unreliable data, and largely abound in mystery and miracles. The second part of this sub-division especially refers to the actions of Paul, but which Luke could have had no opportunity of witnessing. This part contains some insignificant wonder tales of Paul's heroism and marvellous powers, only one of which alleged occurrences, however, is alluded to by Paul himself. We may believe that Paul knew and even secretly influenced the circulation of these

wonder stories about himself, as he was always clamorous about his own importance and his miraculous works.

The last part of the Acts, which gives the acts and experiences of Luke himself, makes no mention of any unnatural occurrences at all, and is most sensible, and even entertaining.

The resurrection of Christ, which was explained by Paul in a figurative or spiritual sense, is referred to by Luke at the beginning of the Acts, as an actual fact. We have no doubt that he simply states this in the way superstitious believers had represented it to him. His credulity and reliance on the representations of others is often shown, and this statement about the resurrection is, therefore, not surprising.

Acts, Chap. i, verse 3. *To whom also He showed Himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*

He neglects to adduce any of these infallible proofs, however, and is not stated to turn up often.

In regard to the few words, which it is alleged Christ had spoken during his forty days sojourn on earth after the resurrection, any comment is useless; for if the principal theory is false, the connecting transactions are invalid also. The only question left for consideration is, in whom should we place the greatest confidence, in Paul, who explained the resurrection and ascension of Christ figuratively, and whom we have reason to consider as a superior authority; or in Luke, who was many years his junior, and who had lived many years after the death of Christ, and far distant from the place of the occurrence? It would also be useless to comment on all the minor suggestions of Luke, after having shown that the essential part is fictitious; but merely to demonstrate his want of sound judgment and the great blunders which he commits, we cite the following incidents as reported by him.

Chap. v, verse 5. *And Ananias hearing these words fell*

down, and give up the ghost; and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6. *And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out and buried him.*

Even should we believe it possible that Ananias suddenly dropped down dead at such a time, it is most improbable that he should have been taken away immediately and buried without the slightest formality or preparation. The body would not have had time to cool. Even a pauper would not be buried with such indecent haste. And that not even his wife should know anything of what had happened is more singular still.

Verse 7. *And It was about three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.*

9. *Then said Peter unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.*

10. *Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.*

These atrocious acts on the part of the apostles were committed simply because of the attempt of Ananias to deceive Peter, and even assuming that they had such power to demonstrate the dire displeasure of the Almighty—assuming this in the most deeply reverent spirit—one cannot but be struck with the enormity of the punishment in comparison with the offence.

The miraculous power which Luke ascribes to the apostles is even greater than that attributed to Christ Himself.

Chap, v, verse 15. *Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.*

Even the angels came straight down from heaven to open

the prison doors for Peter. Verse 19. "*But the angel of the Lord by night, opened the prison doors, and brought him forth.*"

Luke, who, of course, had not witnessed these miracles, heedlessly believed in all these things which were communicated to him. Miracles seemed to him to be the expected and natural occurrences where the apostles were concerned. His faith led him to think that even ordinary people, if they were true believers, could exercise such power. Chap. vi, verse 8. "*And Stephen, full of faith, did great miracles among the people.*" This Stephen, who died a martyr for the sake of his faith, must also have been a special favorite of God, in Luke's opinion.

Chap. vi, verse 15. "*And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.*"

Chap. vii, verse 55. "*But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.*"

This is all interesting enough, but who of all the Jews that were sitting in Council before Stephen, testified that they really recognized the angelic change in his appearance; and who can prove that the heavens really opened and God, with Christ at His right hand, was seen, as the tableau is described as witnessed only by Stephen. The whole may have been but a delusion, or a pretension on the part of Stephen to deceive his persecutors. We may, however, rather suggest, that these delusions originated from Luke himself, or were imparted to him by superstitious people. In the latter case he would scarcely remember the exact words of the various conversations, and the details of all the occurrences which took place. Had Luke been personally known to Peter, the case would be very different; but there is no evidence that these two ever met.

Philip, who is occasionally mentioned by Paul as being his fellow-worker, also, according to Luke, performed many great miracles, the exact nature of which, unfortunately,

however, are not stated. In fact, from the way Luke alludes to them, miracles must have been considered by him as mundane matters not worth describing.

Chap. viii, verse 6. *And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*

Even an angel appeared before this Philip, just to tell him that God had decided that he should go southward, where he would meet a great and rich man, whom God wished to have converted. This man had returned from Jerusalem where Peter and John, who were there at that time, might easily have undertaken the man's conversion; but God seems to have specially wished that Philip should have the honor of saving this particular soul.

25. *And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.*

26. *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Phillip, saying, arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*

27. *And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship.*

28. *Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.*

A greater miracle still had Philip performed on another great man, who was also endowed with supernatural power, but of a different kind to that of Philip.

Chap. viii, verse 9. *But there was a certain man called Simeon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one.*

This man, seeing the great miracles which Philip did, was astonished, and subsequently became baptized. This proves the peculiar idea that all sorts of miracles were to happen.

Chap. viii, verse 13. *Then Simon himself believed also:*

and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Another man, an apostle, of course, had a conversation with God, in which he was told to call upon a man named Saul, who was waiting for him. And then, at the same time, another miracle was performed on Saul, as the angel explains.

11. *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth,*

12. *And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.*

It is, indeed, a singular feature in Luke's writings, that he represents every occurrence in so mysterious a way, and that the miracles after the departure of Christ should have been more varied and extravagant than those which he reveals about Christ Himself. Everything, no matter how ordinary or insignificant, is stated by him to have been done by God's special direction and instigation, and in this way the simplest occurrences are magnified into miracles. Take, for example, this story of Saul and Ananias. The latter, a pious man and sincere believer in Christ, had been informed that Saul, the much-feared persecutor of the Christians, was prostrated with sickness, and was repenting his malicious conduct toward the Christians, and thereupon Ananias went, of his own free will, to visit the sick man. Saul's blindness—occasioned, we may say, by the lightning,—about this time gradually passed away. Why God should have been guilty of such a farce as that ascribed to Him by Luke, in order to bring about such an insignificant occurrence, is quite incomprehensible. Neither can we discover where Luke acquired his exact knowledge of the proceedings and conversations, which he relates in so closely connected a form, as he only knew Saul (or Paul) in later years, and Ananias probably not at all. Luke apparently loved and believed in mystery, and probably what was not

communicated to him in that spirit, he himself improved in this direction. All that concerned God and Jesus Christ, had to be mysterious and supernatural. In dealing with the followers of His Son, God would not avail himself of the natural means, but embrace every opportunity of showing his arbitrary power. This was Luke's idea.

The conversion of Saul, mentioned before, is here related in so mysterious a manner, that it bears but little resemblance to other reports of the same incident.

There is another point. Luke seems to think there was no distinction of power between Christ and His human apostles and adherents. The power of raising the dead, for instance, he attributes to Peter.

Chap. ix, verse 40. *But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.*

Luke does not even limit the power of seeing heavenly visions to the true believers only.

Chap. x, verse 1. *There was a certain man in Cesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,*

3. *He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.*

4. *And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And He said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.*

5. *And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter.*

The vision of Peter, or trance, as Luke calls it, is an appendix to the former real angel appearance, and had to be narrated in order to coincide with that story.

Chap. x, verse 10. *And he became very hungry, and would have eaten, but while they made ready, he fell into a trance.*

11. *And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descend-*

ing unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth :

This miracle was probably manufactured to justify the participation of the heathen in the benefit of the Church, to which the converted Jews probably claimed to be alone entitled.

In regard to Peter's second imprisonment and release, we must wonder that God allowed him to be imprisoned at all, as he could have told him in a dream to escape to a safe place. God, however, according to Luke, was aware that He could easily liberate His servant, and preferred to do it with as much display of His power as possible. The authorities, in remembrance of Peter's previous escape, not only imprisoned him, with a strong guard, but shackled his hands and feet with chains.

Chap. xii, verse 7. *And behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison ; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly, . And his chains fell from his hands.*

But in this little game between God and the humans, there does not appear to have been exactly fair play. We cannot but consider it most unjust that the two keepers who, by God's will, allowed the prisoner to escape, should have received the punishment for God's own deed.

Chap. xii, verse 19. *And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they shou'd be put to death.*

It is a matter for wonder, too, that God suffered James, the brother of John, to be killed by Herod, when it was so easy for Him to prevent it. Chap. xii, verse 2. "*And killed James the brother of John with a sword.*" Whether this James really existed, and was a prominent member of the Church, there is nothing to show. He might be the author of the epistle of that name, and consequently the brother of the evangelist John, to whom the latter, however, never referred.

Remarkable also is the reported death of Herod, which

was not in consequence of his conduct towards the apostles or believers, but for personal vanity. But this death scene of Herod, shows the childish imagination of Luke. Herod was dissatisfied with the Jews of Syria and Sidon, or probably reprimanded them. On this occasion he may have been very angry and harsh, and addressed them in an arbitrary way. This induced the Jews to accuse him that he was arrogating to himself an authority beyond him, and spoke not as a fellow man, but as a god. It is represented that this angered God, and He sent down an angel to punish Herod with an awful death.

21. *And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.*

22. *And the people gave a shout, saying, it is a voice of a god, and not of a man.*

23. *And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.*

All this portion of Luke's report is full of mystery and obscurity, and shows that the writer must have been in a pitiable state of superstitious feeling.

Thus far Luke refers only to some of the more prominent members of the church, and although Peter and John at all events lived long after the time referred to, and labored in Asia Minor and Greece, they are never mentioned again. This proves that he only knew them by tradition, and never had travelled much or come in contact with them. Neither could he have personally known anything of them at the time to which this history refers, as he was a covert of later date.

Chapter xiii of the Acts commenced a new epoch with Paul, and successively introduces entirely new people, and more reasonable reports come forth. The first verse reads:

Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrach, and Saul.

This seems to be the time when Paul first entered upon his ministry, and according to Luke's fancy, again being divinely inspired to the work, but this time by the Holy Ghost. *Verse 2. "As they administered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them."*

John, who was at first in company with Paul, appears to have disagreed with and parted from him. *Verse 13. "Now when Paul and his companion loosed from Pamphos they came to Serga in Pamphylia, and John separating from them returned to Jerusalem"*

Luke's references to John the Baptist, as the alleged forerunner of Christ, were possibly based upon communications from Paul, but we must at once observe that the theories of Luke in reference to John the Baptist do not entirely correspond with those of Paul, but rather convey the idea that John, instead of co-operating with Christ, was a prophet of himself, and preached the baptism of repentance and the coming of the expected Messiah, but not in relation to Christ.

Chap. xiii, verse 24. When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

Neither can he have recognized Christ, or he would have advised his adherents to follow His gospel as the only sure way to salvation. John is said to have baptized Christ, but no where is it stated that he acknowledged Him as the expected Messiah. On the contrary, John kept his own followers, and they did not know anything of Christ until long after the foundation of the Christian Church, as is frequently and distinctly referred to by Paul himself.

Chap. xviii, verse 24. And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

If John the Baptist really had recognized Christ, he would have preached and adhered to Him and His gospel, instead of continuing the preaching of his own doctrines in opposition to Christ, during the latter's lifetime, and even after His death. He strongly advocated the coming of the Messiah, and Paul, as stated before, in order to avail himself of the success of John's preaching, cunningly proclaimed that Christ was the expected Messiah whose advent John had so successfully preached.

Chap. xix, verse 3. *And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.*

4. *Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus.*

This suggestion receives additional confirmation from the assertion of Luke that John, when he expected to die, stated that he was not the man they supposed him to be, but that he had revealed Him that was to follow. Luke here seems to forget that Christ had lived at the same time with John.

Chap. xiii, verse 25. *And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not He. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loose.*

There are other proofs which might be adduced to show that John did not believe Christ to be this one Messiah he preached. For example:

Luke, Chap. v, verse 33. *And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?*

Luke, Chap. vii, verse 19. *And John calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*

If John the Baptist had believed in Christ, and preached

in His favor, he would at His appearance have followed Him. He would not have suffered his adherents to remain a separate sect from Christ. Neither would he have needed to have inquired concerning Christ's identity.

Apollos, who was one of John's disciples, does not seem to have accepted the explanation of Paul, and subsequently to have left his own sect for that of Christ.

1st Corinthians, Chap. i, verse 12. *Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.*

Later, however, he deserted the Christians, perhaps on account of the incredible fables concerning Christ, which they endeavored to impose upon him. It was this, in all probability, that led him to ridicule the Christian gospel, and his ridicule in turn excited the anger of Paul towards him. Titus, Chap. i, verse 3. *"Bring Zenas the lawyer, and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting them."*

That Paul availed himself of all kinds of tricks to secure success, as has been suggested before, is plainly evident from Luke's assertion that Paul frequently, in order to please the Jews and Greeks, preached only the Gospel of God, leaving Christ out of his teachings altogether.

Chap. xviii, verse 4. *And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.*

5. *And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.*

He first introduced the testimony of Christ when Silas and Timothy were present. This conduct gave dissatisfaction, for on account of it many of Paul's admirers turned from and blasphemed him, as is shown in the succeeding verse.

Verse 6. *And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*

Luke manages in this little history of the doings of some of the apostles, to introduce a number of new miracle tales concerning Paul. Of course this great apostle could in nothing be less than any of the other apostles, and about him also some wonderful stories gained currency. In questioning the credibility of them, we need not consider it necessary to deny everything that is reported of him. We can have no doubt that much of what is stated is based on facts, but as the course of the narrative embraces a period of several years, and the places of action and attendant circumstances differ all the time, we could hardly expect a reliable report except from Paul himself. As many of the latter's reports are at variance with those of Luke, we must suppose that all the details were gathered by Luke and put into an historical form, including all the fables about Paul which had gained currency at different periods.

The miraculous power was so great in Peter's day that even his shadow worked wondrous cures; but this was far surpassed later on, according to the testimony of Luke. Paul's very garments, down to his handkerchief even, were endowed with this supernatural gift, and when Paul was absent they took the clothes he left behind and worked miraculous cures upon the sick with them.

Chap. xix, verse 12. *So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the disease departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.*

Besides this there are other personal miracles attributed to Paul, of which we may refer to the one where a false prophet, who also worked miracles, had to submit to the superior miraculous power of the apostle.

Chap. xiii, verse 6. *And when they had gone down through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus.*

Verse 11. *And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand.*

Among the other allusions to special miraculous acts of Paul that are mentioned by Luke are the following:

Chap. xiv, verse 10. *Said with a loud voice, stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.*

Chap. xix, verse 11. *And God wrote special miracles by the hand of Paul.*

The comical character which Luke attributes to different ruling spirits, adds still more to the puzzle of his narrative.

Chap. xix, verse 13. *Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.*

14. *And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.*

15. *And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?*

16. *And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.*

We observe in the first place that there were people invested with the miraculous powers of exorcists, and that these having met with no success with the evil spirits who knew Christ and Paul, they made use of Christ's name as the one to conjure with. This profanation of that holy name even vexed these evil spirits, so much so that the man whom they had in possession leaped upon the exorcists and avenged the misuse of Christ's name. We observe from this that some evil spirits existed, who were even in favor of Christ.

Another great miracle happened on Paul's account while he was imprisoned the third time, without the help of any angels this time, but yet attended with astonishing results.

Chap. xvi, verse 26. *And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.*

Verse 28. *But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.*

We must be surprised that such a great earthquake could happen without doing any damage in general, but that its only effect was to burst open the doors and loosen the bonds of the prisoners, and that the prisoners did not avail themselves of the opportunity to escape in the general excitement. However, the supposition must have been that the prisoners were inspired by the secret influence of Paul's power. The effect of this great miracle was that Paul only was released, and that the jailer and his household became converts. This is shown to be God's only purpose in sending the earthquake.

Chap. xvi, verse 33. *And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.*

The greatest miracle of all, however, is that Paul who loved so much to boast of and magnify himself, and who made such ado about his escape in a basket from the walls of Damascus, and is continually boasting of the many stripes he received, and his dangers on the sea and on land, from robbers and from heathen; who had performed so many miracles and seen Christ in a vision—the greatest miracle is that he did not mention, among the rest of his boastings, this miraculous escape of his, which is described by Luke.

The serious disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, who had always been ardent friends and companions, furnishes additional evidence as to the truth of what has been remarked before in reference to Paul's character. They disagreed on account of Mark, their fellow-worker and junior, and as Barnabas probably refused to submit to Paul's impositions, he went off, and took Mark with him.

Chap. xv, verse 39. *And the contention was so sharp between them, that they parted asunder one from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.*

That Paul, in fact, was odious to many, we may perceive from his being especially persecuted, while Silas and Tim

othly were permitted to carry on their work unmolested.

Chap. xvii, verse 13. *But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.*

14. *And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea; but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.*

Paul suffered much hardship, we can have no doubt, and that he was really stoned, of which he boasts, we may believe from Luke's testimony, although the latter could not have himself witnessed it.

Chap. xiv, verse 19. *And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.*

20. *Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.*

Paul could not have been so very badly injured, as he was able to rise shortly afterward, and left the city the following day. He perhaps, in his artful way, feigned death, to induce the crowd to desist from their cruelty to him.

He also received stripes once, according to Luke, and this is all Luke has to say of the terrible sufferings of which Paul himself boasts so much.

Chap. xvi, verse 23. *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely.*

Paul's escape from Damascus Luke does not mention at all, which shows that some real facts were altogether unknown to him, and proves the unreliability of his reports.

That the Christian Church was at that time considered nothing more than a separate religious sect, depending on Jewish doctrines and revelations, and that Paul continued in heart to be a Jew, is evident from the close connection he kept up with the temple at Jerusalem, and his disputes about the circumcision of the converted Gentiles.

Chap. xv, verse 5. *But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.*

Mark, who was the assistant of Paul and Barnabas, seems to have been a converted Jew who had been brought up at Jerusalem, and perhaps he was a son of the same woman Mary, who is mentioned by the Evangelist as being frequently in the company of Christ.

Chap. xii, verse 12. *And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.*

Chap. xii, verse 25. *And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John whose surname was Mark.*

This, perhaps, may have been the time of which Paul speaks in Galatians, Chap. ii, verse 1. "*Then fourteen years after (consequently about eighteen or twenty years after Paul's conversion) I went up again to Jerusalem, with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.*" Galatians, Chap. ii, verse 9. "*And when James, Cephas and John (John the Evangelist most probably, as John with the surname of Mark must have been too young to form an intimate alliance with them) who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen and they unto the circumcision.*"

Thus far Luke refers to transactions concerning Paul at which he could not have been present, and he first made Paul's acquaintance years after, when the apostle visited Rome.

Chap. xix, verse 21. *After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there. I must also see Rome.*

At the 20th Chapter we observe Luke, for the first time,

uses the word "we," indicating that he was himself present and witnessed the occurrences described, and from this point there is an obvious difference in the character of his narrative. Chap. xx, verse 6. "*And we sailed away from Philippi, after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troasin five days, where we abode seven days.*"

Luke does not mention this meeting with Paul as an extraordinary occurrence, and therefore we may suppose that Luke must have been familiar with Paul, and that this must have occurred after Paul's second or third visit to Rome.

Between these two periods in Luke's narrative, considerable time must have elapsed, and we have also to allow some time from Luke's conversion up to the time when he felt so devotedly attached to the new doctrine, that he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to see the place where his Saviour died. The most interesting part of this whole book is that which has reference to this journey to Jerusalem with Paul, his reception and persecution there, and finally his journey back to Rome again, all of which must have occupied considerable time. We may well suppose that Luke, being familiar with the art of reading and writing, made memoranda of this important voyage, as he gives such minute and distinct descriptions of the circumstances attending it. It was a momento of his life which he was proud to reveal. That it was the abridgement of a large story, is suggested by the length of time covered with so few words, Paul's imprisonment alone at this time lasting two years.

Chap. xxiv, verse 27. *But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.*

That Luke did not write the story until some years after, is shown in the fact that it is carried on for some time after Paul's return to Rome. Chap. xxviii, verse 30. "*And Paul dwelt two years in his own hired house, and revealed all that came in unto him.*" From all this we have to make our calculations as to the period of Luke's evangelism.

Luke also furnishes a lively picture of the peculiar wayward character of Paul, of which his sophistical philosophy, his forwardness in interfering with and dictating to old and experienced sailors during the voyage, and his childish advice to his fellow-prisoners, are prominent characteristics.

The interpretation of this part adds scarcely anything to the furtherance of our argument, except so far as it goes to show the difference between tradition and actuality. Its contents, however, are sufficiently interesting to command attention, as it gives clear evidence of the spirit and the condition of law and order in those times, and furnishes some incidents of the life and character of Paul, of which we could before form no idea, except to some extent, from Paul's own statement.

In our criticism, we have to take into consideration that Luke regarded Paul as one selected by God to his high mission, and that all he spoke and did was inspired by a higher power, and therefore of the highest authority. One word from him had more weight than one hundred from anyone else. Observe, for instance, the importance attributed to the words of Paul when the young man fell from the window.

Chap. xx, verse 9. *And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.*

19. *And Paul went down, and fell upon him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.*

Chap. xx, verse 12. *And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.*

The narration of Paul's persecution and great suffering which follows, is of little importance. His name and proceedings were well known in Jerusalem, and he was most seriously hated there, on account of his hypocritical conduct towards the Jews. His friends, being aware of this, cautioned him not to go there; but Paul was desirous to

appear brave, and to show his reliance on Jesus Christ, so he refused to be persuaded.

Chap. xix, verse 4. *And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.*

Chap. xxi, verse 14. *And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.*

It is here again to be observed that Luke cannot leave the Spirit alone, but must attribute Paul's proceedings to the inspiration and suggestions of God. The intense feeling of opposition toward Paul must have been very general, and his maltreatment at Jerusalem must have been anticipated. Chap. xxi, verse 10. *"And as we tarried there many days there came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus, and when he was come in to us, he took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet, and said: Thus said the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."*

That Paul really had given cause for such hatred by his hypocritical conduct of preaching to the Jews the doctrine of Jesus Christ, at the same time holding to the old Jewish doctrine himself, is evident from the attempt of his fellow-apostles to refute the rumors in circulation about him to this effect.

Chap. xxi, verse 21. *And they are informed of thee, that thou teaches all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying they ought not to circumcise their children neither to walk after the customs.*

21. *What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.*

Chap. xxi, verse 26. *Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.*

We have also additional and striking proof that the

Christians at that time only formed a special Jewish sect, who adhered pretty much to their own old laws and customs, and being allowed to attend the temple to make their offerings and prayers. Paul, himself, secretly adhered to these old Jewish doctrines at the time that he was attempting to impose new laws and doctrines upon others. This was the principal cause of contempt and aversion that was shown to him. The feeling against him was so strong that the Jews not only threw him out of the temple, but tried to kill him.

Chap. xxi, verse 30. *And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.*

31. *And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in uproar.*

Here will be noticed the capricious and fanatical character of the Jews in those days that they should create such a tremendous uproar on account of such an insignificant matter as this difference of opinion upon a matter of religious belief.

Chap. xxi, verse 38. *Then the chief captain came near, and took him and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.*

34. *And some cried one thing and some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.*

35. *And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people:*

So striking and clear is this portion of the report, that there can be no doubt the occurrences described, really happened. The proceedings which resulted in the execution of Jesus Christ were somewhat similar.

Chap. xxi, verse 36. *For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.*

Paul's imprisonment was fortunate for himself, as in consequence, he escaped the fury of the Jews:

In his defence, he again cunningly avails himself of the difference of opinion which existed in regard to various doctrines, and created a partiality in his favor.

5. *But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.*

7. *And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.*

8. *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.*

This trick of Paul's although abnegating his mission, proved successful.

Chap. xxiii, verse 9. *And there arose a great cry: and the Scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.*

This quarrel made an end of the trial, and the chief captain took Paul away for fear of his safety.

Chap. xxiii, verse 10. *And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.*

Paul's adversaries would not rest, however, but made strong endeavors to be revenged upon him.

Chap. xxiii, verse 12. *And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.*

13. *And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.*

Here again Luke has to attribute the result to the special interference of God.

Chap. xxiii, verse 11. *And the night following, the Lord*

stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

We can hardly criticize the account of what happened to Paul while he was in prison alone, but the expression of Luke that God stood by Paul must be understood as figurative, for God could not very well come down from heaven personally to converse with Paul. The whole conversation is altogether imaginary. Paul may have expressed himself in this way, it being a common phrase unto this day, but Luke states it as an actual fact.

The conversion of Paul, which is but slightly referred to by himself, is here elaborately related, and it is singular that the two reports of the same occurrence show such variance.

Chap. xxi, verse 7. *And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*

8, *And I answered, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest.*

Chap. xxiv, verse 13. *At mid day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.*

14. *And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

15. *And I said, Who art Thou Lord? And He said I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.*

16. *But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;*

17. *Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,*

18. *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

We could hardly have expected Christ, if He really had been a divine being, and really had spoken to Paul from above, to have given such a thorough explanation of what He had selected Paul for, and what He expected of him to do. Neither could such a long conversation have taken place without his followers having heard something of it. It is remarkable, too, that Paul, in his own account of it, seems to have remembered so little of this divine conversation given by Luke. A comparison of the two accounts suggests that the whole story of his miraculous conversion was fabricated by Paul to make out his claim to the high mission he wished to represent. He perhaps never quite made up his mind what the Lord said to him, and related it variously, at various times, as he thought it best suited the occasion. Before Agrippa he seems to have made a pretty long story of it, perhaps to make himself more important.

Paul was careful to allude to no testimony that might be corroborative of the occurrence. We have only his own statement to depend on, and now that we have thoroughly informed ourselves as to his character, we can attach very little credit to whatever he says that is not otherwise supported.

After several examinations and two years of imprisonment, Paul went to Rome to appear before Cæsar, to whom he had made appeal. Chap. xxiv, verse 27. "*But after two years Portius Festus came into Felix's room, and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.*"

Chap. xxvi, verse 32. "*Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.*"

Chap. xxvii, verse 1. "*And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.*"

Before we enter into the details of this famous voyage, we have first to direct our attention to the dangers and difficulties of such a journey, and the significance attached to it in those days. The distance from Adramythium on the

coast of Judea to the place of debarkation in Italy is not more than about 800 miles. The distance, in fact, is very short, and the vessel took its course from port to port in order not to lose its way. Compasses at that time were little known, so that this plan of journeying was necessary. Chap. xxviii, verse 13. "*And from thence we fetched a compass and came to Rhesium.*" It was even considered necessary to lay over during the winter months.

Chap. xxvii, verse 12. *And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north-west.*

The vessels being of so inferior a character to those built nowadays, great caution was necessary, and the progress made was slow. Chap. xviii, verse 27. "*But when the fourteenth day was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near some country.*"

In comparing this with our present mode of travelling at sea, it seems to be almost ridiculous. But we can have no doubt, taking everything into consideration, that such a voyage was in those days a risky undertaking, and attended with some amount of hardship.

Paul, not being familiar with the sea, became excited by the dangers, real and imaginary, that compassed them on every side. It may have occurred to him, that the sailors were either ignorant or neglectful of their duty, and he concludes to communicate his opinion to the centurion.

Chap. xxvii, verse 9. *Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,*

10. *And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.*

The centurion, however, had probably more courage and rational views. He had more confidence in the master of

the vessel than in Paul, and took no pains to conceal it. This hurt Paul's vanity.

Chap. xxvii, verse 11. *Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.*

In consequence of extreme anxiety, in connection with the burden of his mission, Paul was fervent in prayer and fasting, and had peculiar visions and dreams—not an unnatural consequence.

Chap. xxvii, verse 23. *For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.*

Paul imagined great danger on account of the prevailing storm, and, while reproaching the people for not following his advice, represents himself as their saviour.

Chap. xxvii, verse 20. *And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.*

21. ¶ *But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.*

22. *And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.*

Now if it was a prophecy of Paul when he cautioned him not to loosen from Crete, of what good was his prophecy since the storm passed over without injury to any one. If his prophecy was made on behalf of the owner's of the ship or the merchandise it carried, of what use was it for an angel to visit Paul in order to tell him no life should be lost. Chap. xxvii, verse 25. *"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me."*

In spite of his divine assurance Paul is evidently afraid of the danger. He watches the conduct of the sailors narrowly, and suspects them of a design to leave the ship and its passengers to its fate.

Chap. xxvii, verse 28. *And sounded, and found it twenty*

fathoms: and when they had gone a little farther, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

29. *Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.*

30. *And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship.*

He communicates his suspicion to the centurion, and says that if the sailors leave they cannot be saved. He must have forgotten or have placed very little confidence, in the promise of the angel.

Chap. xxvii, verse 31. *Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.*

The centurion had no confidence in Paul's words even yet, and he let the sailors go their way.

Chap. xxvii, verse 32. *Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.*

And really Paul's prophecy was mere empty babble, for nothing serious happened after all. The sailors in all probability returned, for it is hardly to be expected that a miscellaneous collection of passengers would have worked the ship.

Chap. xxvii, verse 40. *And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.*

Paul, as we mentioned before, was full of suspicion with regard to the conduct of the sailors; but he appears to have been mindful of his own safety only. When they struck on the sands he had an idea that all the prisoners were about to be killed, but as this was not done he states that they were saved because the centurion desired to save him. This shows his earnestness in attaching to himself the credit of everything that was done. Chap. xxvii, verse 42. *And the soldier's counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any*

of them should swim out and escape; but the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea and get to land."

Luke's preference for stating everything in an exaggerated way is plainly obvious when he speaks of the barbarians they met with on the little island. We can hardly suppose that any barbarians existed at such a place, near and surrounded by civilized nations. And indeed in Luke's own description of them, they show very little of the barbarian; on the contrary their conduct is marked with great kindness and politeness.

Chap. xxviii, verse 2. *And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness; for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.*

Then Luke must give an example of how Paul's extraordinary power astonished the natives, and the incident of the serpent clinging to Paul offers an excellent opportunity.

Chap. xxviii, verse 3. *And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.*

Probably this serpent had been thrown into the fire with the sticks, and trying to escape had been noticed by Paul and thrown back again. This is the incident. But then Luke relates what the barbarians said among themselves and even what changed their minds and said he was a god.

Chap. xxviii, verse 4. *And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.*

6. *Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god."*

This story is written in such a plain and sensible style that we should be inclined to believe it, had we not already

met with so many instances of Luke's wonderful inventiveness. That the people may have considered Paul to be a prophet, or a wonderful man is not strange. The respectful conduct of his fellow prisoners toward him, might indicate that to them he was a superior being.

In regard to the healing of the sick, we may well suggest that the people expecting that this strange man had wonderful powers, and with his prayers could work miracles, brought out their sick to him; but that he cured any of them is to be doubted. And especially is this so in regard to the case of the father of the Publican, whose sickness was periodical.

Chap. xxviii, verse 8. *And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.*

9. *So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed.*

We cannot wonder that the sick people came to this strange man, because afflicted people, and especially those of the lower and ignorant classes, are inclined to follow any advice, or to try any remedy which is suggested to them. And superstitious people will attribute all sorts of things to supernatural influence, as is sufficiently illustrated at various times in the Scriptures in regard to what is called false prophets.

At the same time we must suppose that in this small island there was not much medical aid to be had, and we may easily believe the readiness with which the afflicted would gather round the man, who was accredited with such wonderful powers of healing as Paul. The statement that they were cured is easily written, though difficult to prove. In general people who obtain cures, are very ready to speak of it; those who are not cured have a natural repugnance to admit that they have been humbugged. Therefore we hear nothing of those who came to Paul and were not relieved from their affliction.

There are, even at the present, many who believe in

sympathetic cures. It is a purely imaginary mode of treatment, but has in many instances proved beneficial. Still no considerate or reasoning being would resort to such humbuggery.

In this last section of Luke, where he records the events of which he was an eye-witness, there are no stories of supernatural incidents, and this, taking into consideration the rest of the book, is a remarkable fact. There are Paul's several trials, his imprisonment, his sea voyage, all recorded, and not a single case of divine interference is referred to except imaginary. Neither is there any explanation why such things did not happen, or any reference made by Luke to those which he alleges happened before in similar cases, but of which he was no eye-witness himself. In fact, in the relation of the author's own experience no miracles appear.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

In order to keep alive in our mind the impressions we have already formed of Luke, and to facilitate our judgment of his evangelism, we continue with this, leaving John's evangelism for a later occasion.

In our investigation of the Acts, we observed remarkable changes in his views, which distinctly indicated various periods; the more distant the occurrences which he is describing, the more fabulous being the story. If we proved that the first part of his Acts, which has particular reference to these distant occurrences, is doubtfully true, we should be justified in using a stronger term in reference to his evangelism, which relates to far more distant times and occurrences. It seems, in fact, to be entirely made up of fictitious stories and fables.

In order to justify this declaration, and to prove that Luke's evangelism is far the larger part made up of such current fables, interwoven by his own imagination, we have to adopt a non-partisan position, and in our researches, justify our own conscience, with the saying of Scripture—
“to the pure all things are pure.”

From the Acts we have satisfactory proof that this evangelism was written by the same man, and most probably only a short time before.

Acts i, verse 1. *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*

2. *Until the day in which He was taken up.*

He commences by informing his friend Theophilus, in

regard to the gospel, that already many have undertaken to put forth and in regular order a declaration of the faith; or, in other words, to make a little history of all they had heard about Christ.

Luke, Chap. i, verse 1. *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us.*

His information, he states, he had from eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, therefore everything recorded by him was to be accepted as reliable. Later, however, it will be proved from what dubious sources he received this information.

Chap. i, verse 2. *Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word.*

Having now a thorough understanding of these things, Luke wished to state it in writing, so that the record of it should not be lost.

Chap. i, verse 3. *It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.*

The first thing he states is a wonderful story about Zacharias and Elizabeth his wife, and the birth of John the Baptist; who the witnesses were of this alleged occurrence can hardly be explained. The only one who could possibly have told this to Luke was Mary, the mother of Christ, because she was the only one who had come into contact with them. She, however, could not testify to that which occurred to Zacharias when he was alone.

Chap. i, verse 11. *And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.*

12. *And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*

13. *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard: and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*

Neither could Luke have received this elaborate communication from Zacharias himself, as both he and his wife were already stricken in years when this occurrence is alleged to have happened.

Chap. i, verse 7. *And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren ; and they both were now well stricken in years.*

Whether Luke ever met the mother of Christ, even is doubtful. When He was at Jerusalem He met some of the prominent members of the Church, but as he does not refer to the mother of Christ, and he certainly would have done had he met with her. This, too, was at least sixty or seventy years after the events which he narrates, and Mary was in all probability dead. As to Joseph the husband of Mary, he does not seem to have received much consideration.

Assuming, for the moment, that Luke did have reliable communication with people then living, who had in some way witnessed these occurrences, why does he pad out his book with so much questionable matter about what the angels said, and what the people thought, and so on.

In close connection with the story of Zacharias and his wife, is related what happened to Mary six months later, and which rather suggests Luke's intimacy with an omnipresent spirit. Chap. i. verse 26. *"And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth."*

Chap. i, verse 28. *And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail ! thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women !*

The natural suggestion here is that Zacharias must either have told his long story to Mary, or she must have related to him what happened to her. However, neither of them seem to have made a memorandum of the occurrences, but it is alleged that Mary kept all these matters in her mind.

Chap. ii, verse 19. *But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*

Notwithstanding that it is conceded the whole was re-

lated from memory, it is given in as direct a manner as testimony before a judge. The whole story is so unrecordable with any natural occurrences, that we must suggest that the whole plot originated in the imaginative brain of Luke. He may possibly have been influenced in the matter by Paul, who had endeavored to convince the followers of John the Baptist that their master was the forerunner of Christ, and the story was set afloat that he had been born by the Lord's will for this very purpose. Paul was cunning enough to suggest this, and Luke simple enough to believe and to record it as fact.

According to the vague prophecies of the old Scripture, Bethlehem, the birthplace of David was considered sacred, and from there a great ruler was expected to arise.

Micah, Chap. v, verse 2. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

The prophecy refers to a great ruler in Israel only, and could not well apply to Christ, who was never a ruler in Israel, and who the Jews never recognized as such. The prophesied Messiah was to be a descendant of the line of David, and to be born in the city of David. It was necessary that Christ, in order to confirm His identity with the prophecies, should have been born in Bethlehem.

Chap. ii, verse 4. *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David.)*

This was not known at that time, however, or even later, because both Christ and many of His early followers were known as Nazarenes.

Chap. xxiv, verse 5. *For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.*

If it had been known from the beginning that Christ had been born in Bethlehem, which was of course of great importance to Himself and those claiming for Him that He was the Messiah, they would have taken care to have been known as Bethlehemites.

If, in regard to the birth of Christ we admit the possibility of His being born under the peculiar circumstances Luke describes, and that all of this was so gloriously precluded, how was it that it all happened in such a quiet inostentatious way? The only remarkable incident in connection with this wonderful birth which Luke records is, that shepherds had seen some angels, one of whom had told them of the birth of Christ. Nothing extraordinary happened to the descendants of David, to the people of Bethlehem, or to Joseph and Mary. Only these shepherds were informed.

Did Luke obtain the story from these shepherds? If so, we would suggest that shepherds are not persons of such great mental ability that the whole world should unreservedly believe them. Their very occupation betokens inferior mental abilities. They generally occupy the long watches in telling ridiculous stories, and in this case, perhaps, while they were so engaged they observed some unusual stir in an adjacent cottage. Curious to know what was going on they drew near, and soon found out the cause of the little commotion. In order to obtain a sight of the little baby they told a story of angels which they had seen. There is really nothing extraordinary in all this. The circumstances attending the birth of Christ appear to be very little known, but in what there is recorded of them there is certainly nothing to lead one to believe it was aught but the birth of a very ordinary mortal.

At the sacred ceremony of circumcision, nothing of a supernatural character is alleged to have taken place, but at the presentation to the Lord some insignificant incidents to which great importance are attached, are said to have happened.

At the time when Joseph and Mary, with the babe, were

in the temple, an old devout man named Simeon was present. To reward this man for his good conduct, the Holy Ghost promised him that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah. This Holy Spirit had guided him to the temple to see the babe.

The partial proceeding of this Holy Ghost is rather surprising. Why was one man only selected to be benefitted by this announcement in which the whole earth was directly interested? But this Holy Ghost did not care much about the people in general; he merely wished to introduce Jesus Christ to this good old man. It must appear curious, however, how Simeon came to recognize this baby, as nothing is mentioned to show that it was in any way more remarkable than ordinary babies.

From Luke's point of view, all these singular happenings are recognized facts; they took place as a matter of course; and the explanation as to the how and wherefore is deemed unnecessary. A considerable portion of our present generation, however, are not apt to accept such statements without at least a show of reason and of reasonable proof.

This man Simeon may have been a maniac, or a fanatic, and that he noticed the child, was remembered in after years, and great importance attached to it. That Joseph and Mary expected no such honors to be paid to the babe is shown in Chap. ii, verse 33. "*And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him.*" How could they marvel at those few incomprehensible words of the old man, after all they had been led to expect concerning the child? After the announcements made in regard to its divine origin, was there anything left to marvel at? In accordance with these announcements did they not expect the child would have met with a very different reception? These are points upon which Luke neglects to inform us. He gives us instead a minute description of an old lady who was present—stating how old she was, how long she had been a widow, what she was, where she came from, and other details in regard to her. She follows the

example of the old dotard named Simeon, and thanks God for His mercy in allowing her to see the child. This constitutes Luke's important testimony as to the manner in which the long expected Messiah was received by the people. It was written in a distant country sixty years after it occurred. How did Luke come into contact with the eye-witnesses of the occurrence; and who were they? To the whole story the advice of Paul may well be applied. I Timothy, Chap. xiv, verse 7. "*But refuse profuse and old wives' fables.*"

This seems to be all Luke knows about the birth of Christ, and this, as we have shown, is of a very insignificant and dubious character.

The occurrence of Christ's visit to Jerusalem seems to have been inserted as an incident of His childhood to show promise of His future greatness. But the story is awkwardly put. How is it possible that a mother in charge of such a promising boy should start out on a long journey from a strange city, without first assuring herself of her child's safety? He was not found missing until after one day's journey; his mother never thought of Him for a whole day. Chap. ii, verse 44. "*But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey, and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.*"

According to this Mary was a most careless mother, and unfit for the great charge committed to her. The utterances of the boy, upon which Luke lays so much stress, are nothing very extraordinary when investigated. The boy, being left by His parents, would naturally repair to the temple, as the place was familiar to Him, and he could reasonably expect to meet there some friend of the family.

Chap. ii, verse 49. "*And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business.*" Such strong belief may be found in many children of twelve, and the little story whether true or fictitious, possesses little significance. But all this Luke professes to relate from the memory of the mother whom, it

is next to impossible, that he could have met with himself. Chap. ii, verse 51. "*And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. And His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.*"

The actions of John the Baptist are referred to but slightly. A few incidents only, clumsily dragged into the story, are given to show his connection with the coming of Christ. What John preached is minutely reported, but of his career up to this time nothing is said, and very probably nothing was known. The proceedings and teachings attributed to him, it must be observed, are strictly copied from the old Scripture.

Chap. ii, verse 2. *The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.*

3. *And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;*

4. *As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, (Isaiah, Chap. xl, verse 3,) saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His path straight.*

5. *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways be made smooth.*

This prophecy seems to agree in a remarkable manner with the preaching of John. But we have first to make sure that this really was preached by him, and not attributed to him by the author of the book, who might have considered that such, in all probability, would be his preaching.

If we read the previous verses, from Isaiah, we observe that the words quoted have quite a different meaning from that alleged to have been the meaning of John. Isaiah uses the two terms God and the Lord, evidently referring to one God only; while John refers with the same words to two persons of the God-head. Isaiah, too, prophesied the coming of a Messiah; but, this in itself, is not proof that Jesus was that Messiah. John, no doubt, preached some new

doctrines, or he would not have commanded so large a following; but it is scarcely to be expected that we can form any idea of these doctrines from the few sentences here given, because they are given only to prove one object—namely that he preached the coming of Christ. Chap. iii, verse 15. “*And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not.* 16. *John answered, saying unto them all, I, indeed, baptize you with water, but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire* 17. *Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner, but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable.*”

The statement of this theory is Luke’s special object; the rest he passes over hurriedly. Chap. iii, verse 18. “*And many other things in His exhortations preached He unto the people.*” Even the holy act of baptizing Jesus is given very briefly.

Chap. iii, verse 21. ¶ *Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,*

22. *And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.*

This occurrence probably seemed to him of inferior importance to the teachings which he attributes to John in support of the Jesus’ Claimes—to be the long expected Messiah. But we have other evidence than Luke’s words in regard to this. We have the evidence of John’s conduct. He did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, or he would not have continued to preach his own doctrine—the doctrine of the old Scriptures, that the Messiah was yet to come.

The pedigree of Christ seems to be a wonderful invention on the part of Luke. To make his history complete, and to prove that Christ really was descended of David, he goes

into his genealogy and produces a full list of his ancestry. There was great discussion on this point at the time, and Paul, seeing the difficulties by which it was surrounded, cautioned the apostles not to discuss it in any way.

One of the insurmountable difficulties is found at the very start of this genealogy. Luke traces Joseph down to David, with some difficulty, but Joseph, according to his own statement, is not the father of Christ.

Chap. i, verse 34. *Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*

The angel who predicted to Mary that she was to bring forth the Christ, was deceived in the same way, as he also, it appears, believed that the Messiah was to descend from David.

32. *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David:*

One of these two theories only can be the correct one, either that Christ was the son of Joseph, who might be descended from David, or that Joseph, as the Bible says, was not his father; but the whole story was only made up to deceive the Jews.

On examining this alléged pedigree of Christ, a small part of it can be traced to its old Scripture origin, but the rest is fictitious. This is shown by the wide difference in the names selected by Luke and Matthew. Even in regard to the father of Joseph, to go no further, they are at variance. The difference of opinion upon this point which the following comparative list shows, together with the warnings of Paul not to place trust in genealogies, may be considered satisfactory evidence, that no reliance is to be placed on either of these statements:

| Luke. | Luke. | Matthew. | Luke. | Matthew. | Luke. |
|------------|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Adam | Abraham | Abraham | Joseph I. | Ozias | Semey |
| Seth | Isaac | Isaac | Juda I. | Joatham | Mathathias I |
| Enas | Jacob | Jacob | Simeon | Achaz | Maath |
| Cainan I. | Judas | Judas | Levi I. | Ezekiar | Nagge |
| Maluleel | Phares | Phares | Mathat I. | Mannasses | Esle |
| Tared | Esrom | Esrom | Jorim | Amon | Naum |
| Enoch | Aram | Aram | Eliezer | Josias | Amos |
| Methusala | Aninadab | Aninadab | JOSE | Jechonias | MathathiasII |
| Lamech | Naason | Naason | Er | Salathiel | Joseph II'. |
| Noe | Salmon | Salmon | Elmodam | Zorobable | Janna |
| Sem | Booz | Booz | Cosam | Abind | Malchi |
| Arphaxad | Obed | Obed | Addi | Eliakim | Levi II. |
| Cainan II. | Jesse | Jesse | Melchi | Azor | Mathat II. |
| Sala | DAVID | David | Neri | Sadoc | Heli |
| Heber | Nathan | Solomon | Salathiel | Achim | Joseph IV. |
| Phalech | Mathathad | Roboam | Zorobable | Eliud | Jesus Christ |
| Ragan | Menau | Abia | Rhesa | Eleazer | |
| Saruch | Melea | Asa | Joanna | Mathan | |
| Nachur | Eliakim | Josaphat | Juda II. | Jacob | |
| Thara | Jonan | Joram | Joseph II. | Joseph | |
| | | | | | Jesus Christ |

There are some names herein which appear to correspond, but we must remember, that this could not well be otherwise, as they were both obtained from the same source. It simply shows that a lineage was concocted from the old Scriptures, by both these writers, and that each fitted it on to Christ in his own way.

The next point to be considered is Luke's account of the temptation of Christ. Christ is described as having been led by a spirit into the wilderness, and to have remained there

without food for forty days, during which time He is sorely tempted by the devil. If Christ had been sufficiently human up to this time to need food for His subsistence He could not very well have lived forty days without it. If He was miraculously sustained without food during those forty days, why was He not so sustained during the days or some of the days that He lived among men, so that the miracle might have been witnessed and have testified to His divine origin? Other miracles are said to have been specially performed for this purpose, and what purpose did this one serve, therefore, seeing that no man witnessed it?

The devil takes Him up into a high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment's time. Where is this mountain, from which the whole round world, and all its cities, can be viewed? From what mountain summit could Christ view the antipodes? Even as a figure of speech it is an absurdity. There is only one thing that saves Luke from unmitigated contempt for writing such nonsense, and it is the fact that in the mind of this inspired writer the world was flat, and extended but a few hundred miles beyond the places he was acquainted with. We might endeavor to trace this imaginary episode to its source in Luke's mind, but to attempt to account for these impossibilities, would only be futile, and would lay our efforts open to severe criticism; for of what use is it striving to comprehend the known incomprehensible?

Was the temptation necessary to test Christ's faithfulness to Himself?

We might ask in what form the devil appeared, and how the story became known, unless Christ told it. If He really was the Son of God, He need not, we suggest, have told such absurd anecdotes to mystify the people and bolster up His claims to such distinction. From all we know of Christ through Peter, James and Jude, which we may accept as reliable sources of information, we cannot deny to Him the most sincere respect and reverence, we can have no doubt that His character and intentions were as pure and sincere

as those of any man, and that none of these suggestions and stories, related evidently with an intention to deceive or mislead, can be ascribed to Him. So noble a mind could not have descended to such mean and paltry tricks, or adopted such miserable tactics to gratify a personal vanity.

This critic may suggest to the reader that we intend to reject all of what Luke says in his evangelism. It would perhaps be easier to denounce the whole in bulk as being contrary to all laws of nature and to common sense, but it is our duty to sift out what little there appears to be of truth.

The old Scriptures, as we before observed, were thoroughly studied, and everything that was found therein which could by any possible means be interpreted as referring to Christ was quoted in His support.

Chap. iv, verse 17. *And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,*

18. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.*

19. *To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* (Isaiah, Chap. lxi, verse 1.)

This may well have been recited by Christ. Luke availed himself of the book of Isaiah, and why may not Christ have done so? Under these circumstances why should the wise words of Christ have created any astonishment?

Chap. iv, verse 21. *And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

22. *And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.*

This saying, which Luke twists into a reference to Christ, is simply the testimony of Isaiah in his own behalf. Then we read, Chap. iv, verse 30. "*But he, passing through the midst of them went his way.*" This very ordinary act is stated as though there was something miraculous about it.

There is nothing to show that the excited crowd intended to molest Him.

The reported miracles as to the driving out of devils, the healing of the sick and afflicted are passed over without comment, Christ performing so many miracles that they are commonplace incidentals to the story. By this method he can attribute to Christ thousands of miracles in a few words, without troubling himself to gather facts relating to any of them.

In the present day there are many who believe in the healing of sickness by device, as well as in the supernatural power of "old wives" and fortune-tellers, and even that some have communication with the spirits of the dead. We know from the Scriptures, too, that many practised these arts at the time of Christ, and the miracles attributed to Christ were therefore not so very wonderful to the superstitious people. The false prophets, as we read, worked wonderful miracles also, and also the apostles, so in that miracle-working age the special gifts of Christ were not so remarkable as they appear to be now. Chap. ix, verse 1. "*Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure all diseases.*"

It was not necessary to be a follower of Christ, or even a believer in the Jewish God to do this wonderful thing. Chap. ix, verse 19. "*And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him because he followed not with us.*"

From all this we can see that Luke is putting on record the common fables of the common people as events that naturally occurred.

That the imagined devil and evil spirits occupy such a prominent part in the book, is in conformity with the superstitious spirit of those times. The imagined devil was a terror to humanity, who made his presence known and felt in various ways. All afflictions the people did not understand were visitations of the evil one, a belief which is

current in some eastern countries even to this day. Some of the representations of him by Luke are really comical. He describes quite a number as inhabiting and torturing one man's body; devils who had an individuality, for Christ was curious to know their names; who spoke the common tongue, and experienced common emotions incidental to humanity.

Chap. viii, verse 30. *And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.*

31. *And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.*

What peculiar relations must have existed between Christ and those devils that He should enter into a definite agreement with them, and carry out their wishes.

Chap. viii, verse 32. *And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought Him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And He suffered them.*

And the poor spirits, rely upon the word of Christ, but they were sadly cheated, for the pigs carried them away into the deep and they were drowned.

Then, who did the pigs belong to, and what right had Christ to wilfully destroy any man's property? Had this incident occurred in our day, He would have had to answer to the law about it. Anyhow He is guilty of gross injustice; that is, if it really did happen.

The little story about the servant of the centurion who was about to die but was miraculously saved, is so interesting that it is here cited in full.

Chap. vii, verse 2. *And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.*

3. *And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto Him the elders of the Jews, beseeching Him that He would come and heal his servant.*

4. *And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom He should do this:*

5. *For he loveth our nation, and he that built us a synagogue.*

6. *Then Jesus went with them. And when He was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof.*

7. *Wherefore neither thought I Myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.*

8. *For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers; and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

9. *When Jesus heard these things, He marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

The centurion was most probably a Gentile, as it is stated that he had only heard of Jesus and that he sent Jews to Jesus as interceders. The story is told, however, as though the centurion was himself present and addressed these words to Christ. This is another evidence of careless or wilful misrepresentation on the part of Luke.

The centurion, although an unbeliever, heard of Christ and was at once convinced that He could heal his servant from a distance and sent some Jews to effect this. His faith surprised Christ, and he immediately healed the servant. Then those friends of the centurion, who had represented the case to Christ, went home, and found the man cured. None of the disciples saw either the servant or the centurion. Who knows that the whole is not a Jewish fib to dupe Christ. Chap. vii, verse 10. "*And they that were sent returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.*" Luke, it should be remembered, states this from Rome forty years after it is supposed to have happened.

No doubt the story is told to prove what strong belief

can do even for a heathen ; but it also proves that a thorough belief in Christ as the Son of God is not necessary to obtain heaven's favor.

That such stories as the foregoing were generally accepted, we cannot marvel, as it was an ignorant superstitious time. Then the earth was considered to be a plane, and God lived just behind the clouds, where He sat upon a throne surrounded by angels and saints, and demons traversed the earth contradicting and thwarting His divine will. The marvel is that men believe such absurd things now, when scientific and historical knowledge are so universal. The magnitude of creation and the unchangeable laws of nature are now generally understood ; yet there are thousands of human beings who are as blindly-bigoted in regard to religious sentiment as were those of Luke's day. The mother of Christ is said to have been seen on earth during recent years, and so strong is this belief, that the sick and afflicted in mind or body have waited long years at various places for her reappearance. Any silly story, shrouded in mystery and connected with religion, will find thousands of believers even now.

One of the most astonishing miracles ever recorded is the feeding of the five-thousand people with five loaves of bread and two small fishes.

Chap. xvii, verse 16. *Then he took the five loaves and two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.*

17. *And they did eat, and were all filled : and there was taken up fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.*

The question must of course arise—in what manner did the loaves and fishes multiply so quickly ? This is not mentioned, but then, with people who believe the story of the old Scripture that the world was created out of nothing, such details were doubtless thought unnecessary. We must regret that Luke, who in the beginning of his story is so very exact, did not keep us his detailed style until he reached this point.

Neither can we understand very well how Christ managed to break bread and fishes for five thousand people; at least it must have been a gigantic task. There is, in reality, very little to be said about this miracle, except that if we regard Luke as an authority, it may be believed. Whether our readers, after what has already been shown, are willing to accept his statement as reliable, is for them to consider. The same must be said about other similar miracles, which are referred to only to show that they have not passed our notice. They are, to a great extent, but a repetition of the incidents we have discussed before, and it would be vain to misuse the patience of the reader by commenting upon them at length.

| | | |
|----------|----------|---|
| Chap. v, | verse 6. | The miraculous draught of fishes. |
| “ v, | “ 13. | A man covered with leprosy immediately cured. |
| “ v, | “ 20. | The man with palsy restored. |
| “ vi, | “ 6. | The man with the withered hand restored. |
| “ vii, | “ 12. | The dead son of a widow restored to life. |
| “ viii, | “ 2. | Mary cured from seven devils. |
| “ viii, | “ 24. | Christ commands the storm. |
| “ viii, | “ 47. | A woman with issue of blood for twelve years cured. |
| “ viii, | “ 54. | The only daughter of the ruler of the synagogue recalled to life. |
| “ ix, | “ 42. | A young man cured of an unclean spirit. |

In regard to the miracles respecting the man with palsy, the woman with an issue of blood, and the young man with an unclean spirit, these, if anything of the kind happened, may have been impostors who desired to make themselves prominent, as no testimony is furnished by them or others, that they really were afflicted with such diseases, and whether they recovered or not is another question.

In regard to the seven devils who are alleged to have inhabited Mary, we are curious to know how they acted, and if they were really devils. If they visibly departed from her, then there could be no doubt. And why is it that no one is possessed with devils that may be exorcised nowadays? Is the world become too civilized for them? Mary, in all probability, suffered from some common disorder, which the superstition of the age attributed to devils. It may be that "possessed with devils" was a slang phrase merely.

Christ commanding the storm may be just as easily explained. While He was crossing the Lake of Capernaum in a boat, a heavy wind arose, and frightened His disciples who accompanied Him. Christ may have been sleeping, and when He was aroused on account of the prospective danger, may have answered in His usual composed way, that they should not be afraid, as there was no real danger, and would soon be over. His disciples, considering these simple words as prophetic, marvelled at His power, when the wind, a short time after, did subdue. However, these are explanations only as to how these miracles might have occurred.

Stronger evidence against Luke's authenticity is found in the story of the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, in which he charges Peter, John and James, with having been present.

Chap. viii, verse 51. *And when he came into the house he suffered no man to go in, save Peter and James and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.*

None of the apostles mentioned allude to the miracle in any way. John furnishes us a long report of Christ's doings, and surely would not have neglected this important miracle if he had witnessed it.

The doctrines attributed to Christ by Luke are so crude and absurd that we cannot by any possibility reconcile them to Christ's general character. From the records of Peter and James we gained the impression that they were just,

human, loving. Luke, on the contrary, attributes to him such absurdly irrational doctrine as this.

Chap. xix, verse 59. *And he said unto another, Follow me, But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

60. *Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*

61. *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home at my house.*

62. *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.*

In striking contrast to this is the doctrine in regard to the respect and love we should show toward our neighbors, but above all, to our parents.

Chap. xviii, verse 20. *Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witnesses, Honor thy father and thy mother.*

The significance of these commandments carries with it the duty of paying the highest respect to the remains of those he recommends us to honor so highly; and the observances of this could in no way interfere with the honor to be paid to Christ or to God. To those who believe that Christ preached the purest and sweetest doctrine of love to all humanity, this statement of Luke's must be something of a shock. But such statements must be attributed to want of thought and carelessness on the part of Luke; and this theory is confirmed in the following suggestions by him.

Chap. xii, verse 53. *The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.*

Chap. xiv, verse 26. *If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and*

brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

Chap. xvi, verse 29. *And He said unto them, Verily I say, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake.*

30. *Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.*

These are horrible doctrines, and entirely in conflict with all human and divine laws, and the laws of nature. It can never be believed that such crimes are commanded and rewarded by an all-good and Almighty God.

These doctrines are evidently written to enforce an unconditional belief in Christ, and for no other purpose. There was no thought of the mischief they might do in time to come.

The same carelessly malevolent spirit is observed in the damnation Luke—not Christ—predicts, will visit those cities which do not receive the apostles.

Chap. x, verse 10. *But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,*

Chap. x, verse 12. *But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.*

13. *Woe unto thee, Chorazin ! woe unto thee, Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.*

14. *But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.*

15. *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.*

Cities in which the gospel of Christ had not been preached before, and where His name even had never been known ! In these places the inhabitants were to embrace at once the new religion revealed to them by some strange preacher, or suffer indescribable punishments.

But if one or two received the apostles, then the cities

would be saved ; consequently the safety of thousands depended on one or two people becoming converts. According to this Christ would have been the most vain and cruel tyrant that ever existed.

From this and other instances we have given, our impression of Luke must be that he was a credulous, inconsiderate and stubborn defender of the traditions of Christ ; a man who thoughtlessly adopted any story, or set up any kind of doctrine that was likely to give him support. The absurdity of other of his doctrines is shown in the following.

Chap. xii, verse 22. ¶ *And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat ; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.*

23. *The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*

24. *Consider the ravens : for they neither sow nor reap ; which neither have storehouses or barn ; and God feedeth them : how much more are ye better than the fowls ?*

If we faithfully confided in such a doctrine as this, neither sowed nor reaped, nor took any care for the future, in what a destitute condition we should fall. Even some of the lowest creatures are endowed with instinct to care for the future ; the correct doctrine would have been : Care wisely for the future, both for bodily wants and spiritual, for what shall come hereafter ye know not.

Just as unreasonable are His doctrines about the management of property, which are again in strict contrast to His teachings in regard to the wise housholder, the seaman, the brides and bridegrooms, and others. Chap. xii, verse 33. "*Sell all that ye have and give alms.*"

Chap. xviii, verse 22. *Now when Jesus heard these things. He said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing : sell all thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, follow Me.*

23. *And when he heard this he was very sorrowful : for he was very rich.*

If a whole country were to follow up this doctrine, where

would be the buyers for goods? If the rich sold all they had and distributed it to the poor, the poor would become rich. Absurd as this is, there are a few instances in which communities have endeavored to follow it out. Associations have been formed recognizing the one principle of holding all goods in common. In a small community, and only in a small community, such an idea may be successfully carried out. They gain wealth from the outside world by the sale of their surplus production, as their own wants are regular and limited; and so their wealth accumulates. Nothing is gained, however, in a Biblical sense, by such communities; the grasping ambition of the individual is simply merged into that of the community. From a material point of view such communities, on a large scale, would be impracticable because of the lazy and vicious, who would lie in wait and take advantage of their industrious and good-natured fellow-workers.

According to the laws of nature and human laws, every one is entitled to his earnings. Wealth and power is the impulse to industry, enterprise, invention and progress; it is the great motive power for education and the development of body and spirit.

His theory about the future fate of the rich is just as ridiculous.

Chap. xviii, verse 25. *For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

Now since a camel cannot very well go through a needle's eye, the rich cannot consequently go to heaven, except a big needle was made, with a very big eye, so that a camel could saunter through it, then the rich might have a chance. Luke could not have been entirely clear in his mind as to what riches meant. He only saw the fine houses and the fine apparel of the rich, and being envious, he condemned it. He condemned wealth as wealth. What amount of riches a man might have without endangering his soul he does not hint at. Indeed he rather contradicts himself on

this point. He gives an instance where a wealthy man secured heaven by disposing of only half his wealth.

Chap. xix, verse 8. *And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

9. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house.*

Luke's babblings are of little account, except as they assist in proving that Christianity was especially directed to the poor and ignorant classes; it was a promise to them that all their tribulation here would be rewarded hereafter. This was the secret of its success.

Luke's theory of heaven and hell is a recital of the Jewish doctrine found in the Old Testament.

Chap. xiii, verse 28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.*

While he thus confirms the doctrines of the Jews upon these points, at other places he condemns those who strictly adhere to them. He fails to point out how it is that these Jewish doctrines, which were once sufficient unto salvation, should now work only damnation to those who believe and rely upon them.

In regard to the parables, the meaning of which it is difficult to define in many instances, they are deemed in this discussion to be of little value, as they contain no special doctrine and no historical data.

As to the proceedings and doctrine of Christ in general, we must conclude that there is in it little that is tenable and reliable. If we accept His representations we have to believe Christ to have been an absurdly vain and selfish individual: but we choose rather, to believe Luke is the author of all those deceitful doctrines he attributes to Christ, and keep of the latter the good opinion formed by a careful consideration of the epistles of Peter, John,

James and Jude : none of these give any evidence that such absurd doctrines as those just mentioned ever existed.

Some objection may be raised that these doctrines, if not true, would have been contradicted at once. To this we reply that this book is a private letter which Luke wrote to his friend Theophilus, and that in all probability its contents were not made public until years and years after. It then fell into the hands of some Church authority, who was collecting documentary records of the early Churches, and adopted them as the faithful representation, as the acts and doctrines of Christ

Luke's description of Christ's passion is written in better style than the rest. The facts in regard to this were probably better known and remembered, and therefore Luke's record of them has a greater air of probability about it.

The peculiar proceeding relative to the obtaining of the colt we cannot, however, pass over without special comment. It is a very easy matter to find a colt, at places where donkeys are plentiful, but we must consider it strange that the owner should have been satisfied with the answer of the disciples when they loosed the colt. Chap. xix, verse 34. "*And they said the Lord hath need of him.*" If Christ had been a distinguished ruler, or any one of recognized authority, such favors would readily have been granted by many a stranger ; since, however, Christ and His followers met with so much opposition, He could not have been generally recognized as such. We must suppose that the owner of the colt was a follower and friend of Christ, to whom the disciples were specially directed.

We may well suppose that Christ, considering Himself a superior being, showed a wish to enter Jerusalem as a Prince of Peace ; and in all probability the whole thing was arranged so that it might tally with an old prophecy of Zachariah. Chap. ix, verse 9. ¶ *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold thy king cometh unto thee : he is just, and having salvation ;*

lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

This was a prophecy, as is seen, to be easily fulfilled. About the place designed by Christ where He would sup, there appears nothing miraculous. Chap. xxii, verse 10. "*And He said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water, follow him into the house where he entereth in, etc.*"

The place may have been known to Christ, and the man to whom He directed them be a friend of His. He might previously have met the man, with a water pitcher, at the same place and referred to this.

The prophecy concerning the coming destruction of Jerusalem, attributed to Christ, is likewise strictly copied from the Old Testament, in which the total destruction of that city is repeatedly spoken of. Nevertheless Christ, being thoroughly acquainted with these prophecies, may also have alluded to the dire calamity that was to fall upon this corrupted city. If this allusion of His can be called a prophecy, it must be noted that it is in the very same words that Isaiah uses in reference to the same occurrence. In all probability it was copied from the Old Testament by Luke, and by him attributed to Christ.

Chap. xix, verse 43. *For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,*

44. *And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*

This, as we have shown, cannot be accepted as evidence of the prophetic power of Christ, at it was foretold long before He was born. Nor, although it happened to be fulfilled, is there anything remarkable in the prophecy. The Jews of olden time were an unruly and unstable people, and the thoughtful men of that age simply foresaw what must, in the natural order of things be the result of their

turbulent disloyalty. This natural result, however, is attributed by Luke to the direct vengeance of God—a vengeance set in motion by the obstinacy of the Jews in refusing to accept Christ, on whose behalf Luke likes to assume the whole Bible and all its prophecies was written,

Chap. xxi, verse 22. *For these be the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*

The parable of the corner stone is also copied from the old Scriptures, and was cunningly employed in behalf of Christ. But it does not seem to bear any reference to the expected Messiah.

Chap. xx, verse 17. *And he beheld them and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?*

Isaiah, Chap. xxviii, verse 16. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a precious stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.*

The following prophecy, however, is remarkable as it has been in some sense fulfilled.

Chap. xxi, verse 24. *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

The Jews have not literally been led captive into all nations; but the testimony of their city and their dispersion among all nations has become a matter of fact.

This idea may have originated with Luke himself, who, being a Roman, was annoyed at the pertinacity with which the Jews clung to their ancient worship. And the Jews were independent and obstinate, and very hostile towards their Roman oppressors. Luke, as a Roman, was inspired by this to prophecy that the pride of the Jews would be bowed in the dust, as their history showed it had been before time.

The prophecies in regard to the terrible tribulations through which the world was to pass, and the signs from

heaven that were to appear, are also copied from the Old Testament. Their fulfilment, however, is not yet come, unless we chose to consider the occurrence of some natural phenomena as a fulfilment.

Chap. xxi, verse 11. *And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven.*

Chap. xxi, verse 25. ¶ *And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.*

26. *Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.*

Chap. xxi, verse 32. *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.*

33. *Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away.*

The generation Luke speaks of has passed away, long, long ago. Jerusalem has been destroyed. Wars, pestilence, earthquakes, famine, have visited us frequently, yet still we are contented and prosperous.

Luke's history of the passion of Christ is singularly superficial, brief and incoherently related. The mysterious incidents of the birth of Christ are given as full as possible, even conversations are reported; the noteworthy death of Christ, the most important episode of His life, is merely alluded to. This is remarkable.

In the beginning of this meagre story the devil is again made a scapegoat. He is said to have jumped into Judas to effect his purpose. Chap. xxii, verse 3. *"Then entered the Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being one of the number of the twelve."* This must have been a very daring devil, to enter one of the disciples, and while Christ was present, too; why did Christ, who had command over devils allow it? Christ knew that Satan would enter into Judas, for He alluded to it, and yet does nothing to warn or to save His disciple.

Chap. xxii, verse 21. ¶ *But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table.*

22. *And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!*

This leaves Christ open to a terrible accusation. One whom He had entrusted with the high office of apostle, who had suffered persecution and hardship with Him, and for His sake, was the perpetrator of a crime which He might easily have averted. He actually laid a temptation in the way of His trusted friend. Knowing his weakness and that he would succumb to it. If Christ knew beforehand what was to happen, and it is alleged that He did, He actually tempted the innocent Judas into the commission of a most atrocious crime. This story, if true, stamps the character of Christ with the most shameful act of treachery and hypocrisy.

If any mere outsider had committed the crime of betraying Christ into the hands of His enemies, the result would have been the same. According to Luke, Christ designedly raised the betrayer to high office in order that His fall might be the greater. Are we to believe that Christ was guilty of such a shameful proceeding?

In the remainder of Luke's account of the Last Supper we observe little of importance, except the reference to troubles that were to come.

Chap. xxii, verse 15. *And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:*

Chap. xxii, verse 19. *And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me.*

We must assume from this account that the theory of Christ's foreknowledge of His impending fate, was come to afterwards. Had Christ possessed this knowledge, this last earthly meal would have been of a more special character. It was, as will be proven later, a regular Jewish feast, at which friends gathered, and thanks were said, and prayers

offered such as by the head of the family. There does not appear to have been anything of a special character at the feast, of the passover which was two days subsequent to this. There was great agitation at the time, and they perhaps gathered secretly, not knowing whether they would ever again have the opportunity of feasting together. Christ, no doubt, and indeed all the disciples knew of the dangers by which they were surrounded, and many allusions were probably made thereto.

Luke's carelessness of statements again creeps out in his record of the dispersion by Christ of His disciples.

Chap. xxii, verse 29. *And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me ;*

30. *That ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Here it is stated that Christ had appointed His twelve disciples to sit on twelve thrones in heaven from which they should judge the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve here mentioned must include Judas, who, as Christ knew beforehand, was about to desert Him. Judas, it is assumed, on the other hand, could not go to heaven with such a sin upon his soul, therefore one throne would be vacant and one tribe would have to go unjudged. The idea of the twelve eating and drinking at the Lord's table in heaven is too childish to need comment.

Then we come to the mention of swords at the last supper. This is probably inserted as an introduction to the story of Peter's heroic defence of Christ.

Chap. xx, verse 50. ¶ *And one of them smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.*

51. *And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his ear, and healed him.*

Whether these peaceable disciples always carried swords, or where they so suddenly obtained them, is not stated. On the Mount of Olives Christ withdrew from His disciples one stone cast, to pray.

Chap. xxii, verse 41. *And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed.*

This is probable. Christ was aware of some coming trouble and wished to pray by Himself. But how came Luke to know the exact words He used in His prayer? And how did he find out that the sweat of Christ came down like drops of blood.

Chap. xxii, verse 44. *And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Still more curious is it when we consider his next statement.

Verse 45. *And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow.*

It is strange that the disciples should sleep in the hour of supreme danger to their Lord. This rather shows that they were not aware of any danger, and it is more curious that they should, while asleep, hear and remember the words of His prayer, and also see what was going on.

Chap. xxii, verse 43. *And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.*

That Christ should have told His disciples all that happened, and that He had been praying for His own glorification cannot for a moment be assumed. Neither was there any opportunity for His making such a communication to them. The soldiers came upon them while they still slept; and after Christ's betrayal unto them there certainly was no opportunity, so far as we can learn.

That Judas betrayed Christ, and even with a kiss, we have no cause to doubt; and the denial of Christ by Peter may also be accepted. Christ may have hinted that when trouble came His disciples would leave Him, and Peter had no doubt often assured Him in reply, that no danger should ever part them. When Christ was captured Peter remembered his asservations and desired to be near Christ to prove his loyalty.

Chap. xxii, verse 54. *Then took they Him, and led Him,*

and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

Peter then went early in the morning, when the cocks were crowing, and sneaked into the hall unnoticed, as he believed. But he was recognized and questioned, and for his own safety he frequently denied all relation to Christ. Perchance Christ looked round at the moment, and Peter, meeting His eye, felt ashamed of his cowardice and went out weeping bitterly.

The trial of Christ does not appear to have been witnessed by any of His disciples, as even Peter, the most heroic of the twelve, sneaked away before the proceedings opened. Secret followers of Christ may have been present, however; the whole trial and execution of Christ had most probably become thoroughly well known, and Luke, while on his visit to Jerusalem, may possibly have been able to collect the real facts. The life and actions of Christ were very little known, but the incidents in connection with His death most probably were widely known and remembered. This accounts for the many fables which are interwoven with His life only.

The claim of Christ that He was the expected Messiah caused great excitement among the Jews. To them it seemed blasphemy of the worst possible form. Chap. xxii, verse 69. "*Hereafter shall the son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all—Art thou then the Son of God? And He said unto them, ye say that I am.*"

Chap. xxiii, verse 3. "*And Pilate asked Him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? And He answered him and said—Thou sayest it.*"

This would of course excite to a higher pitch the hatred of the Jews against Him. There is no cause for doubt, either that Herod the tetrach mocked Him.

Chap. xxiii, verse 11. "*And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.*"

Herod possibly desired to please the Jews and to make himself witty at the expense of the prisoner, believing, in all probability, that he was simply a self-deluded fool. Pilate, however, seems to have treated the matter more seriously and to have endeavored to administer impartial justice. Chap. xxiii, verse 14-16: "*Said unto them, ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people, and behold I have examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod, for I sent you to him; and to nothing worthy of death is done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him.*" But this did not satisfy them. Chap. xxiii, verse 21. "*But they cried, saying, crucify Him, crucify Him.*" Pilate, however, does not give way to them.

Chap. xxiii, verse 22. *And He said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go.*

Pilate was not able, however, to control the fury of the Jews.

Chap. xxiii, verse 23. *And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified: and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.*

Finally he had to submit to the popular demand.

Chap. xxiii, verse 24. *And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required*

The following incidents of the story, the great crowd which followed Christ to the place of execution, that Christ addressed the bystanders, that some sympathized with and lamented His fate, that a merciful man carried His cross, that He was crucified between two criminals, and yet prayed for His enemies—some of whom mocked Him, that the soldiers gave him vinegar to drink and cast lots for his raiment; and that

Chap. xxiii, verse 38. "*A superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*"

All this may be in conformity with the facts. Even the consolation to one of the malefactors,

Chap. xxiii, verse 43. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* and all his other sayings at this time, may have been reported correctly, but in the whole story there is nothing that can be accepted as proof of the alleged divine character of the martyr.

Darkness is said to have prevailed from the sixth to the ninth hour.

Chap. xxiii, verse 44. ¶ *And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.*

and, probably this darkness continued until the next morning.

Verse 45. *And the sun was darkened, and the vail of the temple was rent in the midst.*

There might have been a local darkness—occasioned by natural causes, of course—but how did Luke know that it extended over all the world? And it is surprising also how they came to know that the vail of the temple was rent. Only the priests were admitted into the interior of the temple. If they were opposed to Christ they would not mention this evidence of His power; if they were secretly in His favor, they would still keep silent for fear of exciting even more intense feeling against the Christians.

The centurion, it is stated, even came to believe that Jesus was a righteous man.

47. ¶ *Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.*

This might not have been on account of the alleged miraculous circumstances attending His death, but a simple conclusion based on Christ's conduct.

This is the whole of the history of the passion, according to Luke, and there does not seem to be anything very wonderful about it, when it comes to be analyzed, and there is no reason why the facts stated should not be accepted.

The history of the resurrection, however, seems to be an enormous distortion or fabrication. The body of Christ was taken from the cross, and after having been embalmed, according to Jewish custom, was laid in the sepulchre. Chap. xxiv, verse 1. "*Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices they had prepared, and certain others with them, and they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.*" These women went early to visit the grave, and they found the stone removed. Excited by this circumstance they hastily glanced into the sepulchre and fancied they saw two white figures. The women hurried back and told their experience to the disciples and others. Chap. xxiv, verse 9. "*And returned from the the sepulchre and told all these things unto the eleven and to the rest.*" Then Peter went to the grave.

Chap. xxiv, verse 12. *Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.*

Peter also found the grave empty, but instead of the white figures he found the white linen bands which had enwrapped the dead. These white bands, we may suggest, were what the women's excited fancies had transformed into angels.

The body of Christ had disappeared, and they at once remembered that He had preached the doctrine of the resurrection. What so natural, therefore, that it should be spread abroad that Christ had arisen. That the shining figures had spoken to the women is possibly an addition by Luke, or might have obtained currency from the tittle-tattle of the women themselves, who would be sure to make as much as possible of the supposed miracle.

Chap. xxiv, verse 5. *And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?*

On the other hand, we may suppose that the enraged

Jews were not satisfied with having killed Christ, but were desirous of preventing any veneration of His remains. They therefore themselves robbed the grave, and carried away the body to some secret place. This they thought would end the adoration paid to the martyr, but, as it turned out, they defeated their own purpose by so doing, and only increased the belief in Christ's divine origin. From Luke we have no evidence which refutes this theory.

Then the account dives again into the mysterious, of which Luke is so fond. Christ is said to have been seen, not as a spirit, but a being of solid flesh and blood.

Chap. xxiv, verse 13. ¶ *And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.*

These two met a stranger on the road, who spoke of the doctrines of Christ, and also of His martyrdom. He spoke so well, and appeared to be so full of this subject, that the men, having heard of Christ's resurrection, came to the conclusion that he must be Christ. But He was quite different in appearance, and the idea of his personality only came to them subsequently. Nevertheless they went and informed the disciples, perhaps with the view of making themselves important.

Chap. xxiv, verse 34. *Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.*

This Simon must not be confounded with Simon Peter, as the latter was among the disciples to whom the story was reported. Chap. xxiv, verse 33. "*And they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.*"

The appearance of Christ in the midst of the gathered crowd we must believe to be a fabrication, as neither Peter nor James, who allude to the sufferings and death of Christ, make any mention of having seen Christ after death. Paul, who entered on his mission a few years later, seriously protests against the fable of this bodily resurrection. But Luke endeavors to prove it by the following.

Chap. xxiv, verse 42. *And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb.*

43. *And He took it, and did eat before them.*

Then Luke goes on to report that Christ, in the body, led His disciples to Bethany and there disappeared from their sight.

Chap. xxiv, verse 50. ¶ *And He led them out as far as Bethany; and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.*

51. *And it came to pass, while He blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*

The rest of the book is of such a superficial and unnatural character, that to give consideration to it, would simply be a waste of time, and more so, when later on Luke's reliability will come seriously into question.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

This evangelist we are by this time well acquainted with, as Paul refers to him frequently, II Timothy, Chap. iv verse 11. "*Only Luke is with Me. Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to Me for the ministry* (From Rome.) Colossians, Chap. iv, verse 10. "*Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner, saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom you received commandments—if he come unto you receive him and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision.*" (From Rome,) Philemon, Chap. i, verse 24. "*Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fe'low-laborers.*" (From Rome.) I Peter, Chap. v, verse 13. "*The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus my son.*"

Paul speaks of Mark as being the sister's son of Barnabas; and Peter says "Mark's my son," consequently Peter must have been the brother-in-law of Barnabas. But this term "son" is frequently used by the church fathers to the young converts, and in this case it may have no other meaning. Mark certainly showed a marked preference for the companionship of Paul rather than of Peter. Once on a time, however, he had a serious disagreement with Paul.

Chap. xv, verse 37. *And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.*

38. *But Paul thought not good to take him with them who had departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.*

39. *And the contention was so sharp between them, that*

they departed asunder one from the other: and Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cypruss:

This may prove that Mark although young possessed some of the obstinacy of Paul himself or qualities he didn't like. Mark was of the circumcision, and most probably was a Galilean, as according to Luke, his mother lived in that part of the country. Acts xxi-verse, 12. "*And when he had considered the thing he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark.*"

We can have no doubt that this Mark, sometimes called Marcus, was the author of "the Gospel according to St. Mark" as no other Mark is referred to in any of the gospels. Mark had visited Rome and was well known to Luke, and encouraged by the marked favor shown to Paul, also desired to make himself of some prominence. He therefore started to write the life of Christ. His style of writing shows that he was the inferior to Luke in education, but his narratives are much more carefully told, and are in all probability much more reliable. We must remember, too, that Mark was all the while travelling and in communication with the prominent leaders of the Church, while Luke spent nearly the whole of his life in Rome. Therefore we could expect a more reliable account from Mark than from Luke.

The time when Mark wrote his testament, must have been about the same time that Luke wrote his, namely, fifty or sixty years after the death of Christ, and was too young a man to have ever seen Him.

In regard to the birth and the first years of Christ's life, he makes no mention. Possibly he could not accept the wild fables told of how Christ came into the world. Like Luke he appears to have drawn much information from the Old Testament.

Chap. i, verse 2. *As it is written in the Prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*

Malachi, Chap. iii, verse 1. *Behold I will send my messenger, r, and he shalt prepare the way before me.*

The circumstance that the Jews believed a Messiah would come, led to Christ being proclaimed the expected one; here is no real proof however, of any connection between the prophecies and Christ. Numerous supposed coincidences are given, but these prove no more than those adduced to show the Scriptural relation of John the Baptist to Christ.

Chap. i, verse 3. *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.*

This is simply a paraphrase of a verse in the Old Testament.

Chap. xl, verse 3. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

These two texts seem to correspond very well, but in the original they have no reference either to John the Baptist or to Christ. The expressions of Mark in regard to John's teachings seem to correspond in a remarkable degree with those of Luke, the only difference, being that the diction of the latter is a trifle better.

Chap. i, verse 7. *And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.*

Luke, Chap. iii, verse 16. *John answered, saying unto them all : I indeed baptize you with water, but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose ; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."* The above is the only reference Mark makes to the teachings of John.

His account of the temptation of Christ is very short and indefinite.

Chap. i, verse 13. *And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan ; and was with the wild beasts ; and the angels ministered unto Him.*

what the wild beasts had to do with His temptation is not very clear. The incident, however, is differently related by

Luke, and why they should not agree in this account as well as in the reference to John just quoted, is difficult to explain. The same inexplicable difference between the statements of these two writers is noticed in the wonderful fish story.

Chap. i, verse 16. *Now as He walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea : for they were fishers.*

17. *And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.*

Luke here tells a story of a wonderful draught of fishes, on account of which Peter was led to believe in Christ. This occurrence Mark should have known better than Luke, as he had been in the company of Peter. Had Luke told the story of Mark, and Mark that of Luke, both statements would have seemed more natural and consistent.

Mark's faith seems to have been very wonderful. He states how the men followed Christ as if such conduct on their part was a mere matter of course and all things turned invariably in his favor.

18. *And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him.*

20. *And straightway He called them : and they left their father Zebedee in the ship.*

25. *And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.*

28. *And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round Galilee.*

Chap. i, verse 12. *And immediately the spirit drove Him into the wilderness,"* and so on.

Mark alludes to the great doctrines of Christ, but gives no idea of what they were. Instead, thereof, he reports any number of miracles, the performance of which, apparently, immediately followed each other ; about all these wonders there is no wonderment. No doubt he found it easier to tell insignificant miracles than to discuss sensible doctrines.

Again we arrive at a most peculiar coincidence. From

Chap. ii, verse 4, down to Chap. iii, verse 6, corresponds entirely with Luke from Chap. v, verse 9 to Chap. vi, verse 11. We might consider it convincing proof of the truth if the two authors corroborated the principal incidents in a story, but when the details of each have a close corresponding connection, even to the use of similar words and phrases, then we must consider that the two accounts were written by collusion for a purpose, or that one was copied from the other. It cannot be called a coincidence though, for as we read on we find other instances of the same tenor. Take the following examples of the two evangelists, and in each there will be found a close relation. Luke appears to have padded out his story with theology, and Mark with wonder stories. That is the only difference.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|-------|------|----|-------|------|----|----|----|-------|-------|----|
| { Mark III. | 8 | 10 | IV. | 4 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| { Luke VI. | 17 | 19 | VIII. | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| { Mark IV. | 20 | 21 | 22 | 24 | V | 9 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| { Luke VIII. | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | — | 30 | 32 | 34 | 35 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 39 |
| { Mark V. | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 30 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 39 | 41 |
| { Luke VIII. | 41 | 42 | 43 | 43 | 44 | 44 | 45 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 54 |
| { Mark VI. | 8 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 30 | 35 | 36 | 38 | | | |
| { Luke IX. | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | | | |
| { Mark VI. | 40 | 41 | 42 | VIII | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 34 | 35 | 36 | | |
| { Luke IX. | 14 | 16 | 17 | XI | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | | |
| { Mark VIII. | 38 | IX | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 14 | 17 | 18 |
| { Luke XI. | 26 | | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 33 | 35 | 36 | — | 37 | 38 | 40 |
| { Mark IX. | 20 | 34 | 37 | 38 | 40 | X | 17 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 23 | | |
| { Luke IX. | 42 | 47 | 48 | 48 | 50 | XVIII | 18 | 19 | 20 | 22 | 24 | | |
| { Mark X. | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 33 | 34 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | |
| { Luke XVIII. | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 32 | 33 | 35 | 38 | 39 | 40 | |
| { Mark X. | 51 | 52 | XL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 15 | 17 | 27 | 28 |
| { Luke XVIII. | 41 | 42 | XIX. | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 35 | 36 | 45 | 46 | XX. | 1 |
| { Mark XI. | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | XII. | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| { Luke XX. | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 8 | | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| { Mark XII. | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| { Luke XX. | 21 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 32 | 33 | 35 | 37 | 38 |
| { Mark XII. | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | XIII. | 1 |
| { Luke XX. | 41 | 42 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | XXI. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |
| { Mark XIII. | 8 | 9 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 26 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | XIV. | 10 | 11 |
| { Luke XXI. | 11 | 12 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 27 | 29 | 31 | 32 | 33 | XXII. | 4 | 5 |
| { Mark XIV. | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 30 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 43 |
| { Luke XXII. | 13 | 14 | 21 | 23 | 22 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 34 | 41 | 42 | 45 | 47 |

When we arrive at the history of the passion we observe that there is just as wide a divergence in occurrences ; in style, and in the ordinary expressions used, as there is previously a similarity. The general facts correspond, but the details are entirely different. This is possible of explanation. It may be that the two received these accounts orally from witnesses and each wrote it in his own way. This supposition is strengthened by the important facts touching the death of Christ of which some are reported by one and not by the other. Mark mentions the anointment of Christ before His death, while he makes no mention of His presentation before Herod, etc.

The further explanation of the wonders reported by Mark are not necessary, as it is shown that the principal communications of Mark and Luke emanate from the same source. In all probability they wrote from the same memoranda, the few alterations noticeable being probably the result of an agreement to lessen the unavoidable similarity as much as possible by adopting different style of composition.

In regard to the resurrection, Mark is more indefinite than Luke even, and only gives a vague representation of this last glorification. This does not inspire much confidence of its actuality on account of the superficial, incoherent and indefinite character of the report, and seems rather to indicate that Mark knew but little whereof he wrote.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

About this evangelist, who he was, where he lived, and what his occupation was, we know nothing. The name is mentioned as being one of Christ's followers, who according to his own account is said to have been a Publican, Chap. ix verse 9. "*And as Jesus passed forth from thence He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He said unto him follow Me, and he arose and followed Him.*" Mark and Luke call this man Levi. See Mark, Chap. ii verse 14; Luke, Chap. v verse 27.

The book of Matthew does not give the slightest indication of the presence of the author at the occurrences narrated. The conversation of Christ, at His first meeting with Matthew the Publican, is written in such a way that it leads one to the conclusion that the disciple Matthew, if he ever existed at all, was not the same person who wrote this Gospel. Neither is the name of Matthew ever mentioned by either of the apostles Peter, John, James or Paul, so that if there was a disciple of Christ, of such a name, he must have been of no great fame or position in the Church.

The obvious incorrectness of what is stated to be the genealogy of Christ, has been discussed already in the chapter on Luke; it is only again referred to here, to point to the mathematical computation of the descent of Christ, which obviously is calculated to prove his expected coming ages beforehand.

Chap. i, verse 17. *So all the generations from Abraham*

to David are fourteen generations ; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations ; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

Beginning with occurrences which Luke narrates as having preceded the birth of Christ, we find that Matthew knows nothing of them ; he makes up for this, however, by giving more details of the actual birth of Christ. In his statement of these, leaving the angelic appearance out of consideration, we note the foolish superstitions which he cherishes, the intimation of great events by signs in the heavens. Believing this, it is natural that he should say something of the signs which betokened so important an event as the birth of a Messiah. Certain wise men in the East (wherever that may be) observe an extraordinary star ; they find that it moves ; they become aware of its object, namely, that it is sent to lead them somewhere ; so they follow it to Jerusalem. When it came to Bethlehem it stopped, and pointed to the spot where the birth of a Messiah had just then taken place. It is useless to attempt to discuss this miracle. Do what we will, we can not imagine a star moving through the sky a couple of hundred feet before the noses of two or three pedestrians, and accommodating itself to their pace. It is one of those stories, of which there are many in the New Testament, easy to tell, but hard to explain. We leave this task to the faithful, who ridicule the miracles attributed to Mahomet, but with the same breath swear by the equally preposterous stories of Christianity. The suggestion that God had warned these wise men in a dream that they should not return by way of Jerusalem seems wholly unnecessary, and only stated from a wish to prove that the Almighty exerts a special influence over all earthly and ordinary matters. If we believe in such influence, does it not strike us as strange, that none of the Jews to whom this Messiah was sent, should have dreams about Him ; and that these wise men from a distant land, who were hardly concerned or interested in this event,

should be the only persons permitted to know anything of it?

Then, in regard to the massacre of infants, which Matthew reports as having taken place at Bethlehem, in consequence of the birth of Christ coming to the knowledge of Herod, how is it no mention is made of such a horrible occurrence by any other writer? Luke, who had been in Jerusalem, makes no mention of it, and, after reading his gospel, can anyone suppose, that it was probably in his opinion too insignificant a thing to be remembered or recorded? Flavius Josephus, who is very detailed in his report of Herod and his doings, mentions nothing of this wholesale childmurder, but on the contrary pictures Herod as a just and generous ruler.

Neither can we see what could have induced Herod put such a diabolical scheme into operation. At the birth of Christ he was then old, and could imagine no possible rivalry from the infant. In addition Herod was subordinate to the Emperor of Rome, who would have condemned such an act of wilful cruelty and in all probability have punished its perpetrator. The story of Herod's cruelty can perhaps be traced back to the Old Testament. Matthew was probably acquainted with the historical facts that King Pharaoh ordered the execution of the male children of the Jewish slaves in Egypt—and not knowing its origin founded upon this Herod's bloodthirsty edict.

It was believed that the Messiah would certainly make His appearance in Bethlehem and therefore these invented stories to contradict the general belief, that He came from Nazareth.

The cited prophecy found at Micah, Chap. v, verse 2, is correctly copied at Chap. ii, verse 6. "*But thou Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judea, yet out of thee shall come unto Me, that is to be the ruler of Israel; whose goings forth have been from old from everlasting.*"

To justify the name by which He was generally known, Matthew ascribes to a prophecy.

Chap. ii, verse 23. *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*

This must be an invention of Matthew himself, as no such prophecy is to be found in the Old Scriptures, except those related to different occurrences.

In regard to the remainder of Matthew's testimony, we adopt our former rule of comparing the different statements of the three authors, Matthew, Mark and Luke, and place them opposite each other, which gives us astounding results.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|------|------|-----|-----------------|
| { | Matt. III. | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 16 | 17 | IV. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| | Mark. | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | |
| { | Luke III. | 7 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 17 | 21 | 22 | IV. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9 | |
| { | Matt. IV. | 6 | 7 | 9 | 10 | | 12 | 13 | 18 | 19 | 20 | | 21 | 22 | V. | 15 18 29 30 |
| | Mark | — | — | — | — | I. | 14 | — | 16 | 17 | 18 | | 19 | 20 | IV. | 21 — IX. 47 43 |
| { | Luke IV. | 11 | 12 | 6 | 8 | | — | 31 | — | — | — | V. | 10 | — | — | XVI. 17 — — |
| { | Matt. VI. | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | | 24 | | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 30 | 31 | 32 33 VII. 2 5 |
| | Mark | — | — | — | — | — | | — | | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| { | Luke XI. | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | XVI. | 13 | XII. | 22 | 24 | 25 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 31 VI. 38 42 |
| { | Matt. VII. | 9 | 10 | 11 | | 24 | 26 | VIII. | 2 | 4 | | 6 | | 11 | 14 | 20 21 22 |
| | Mark | — | — | — | | — | — | I. | 40 | 44 | | — | | I | 29 | — — — |
| { | Luke XI. | 11 | 12 | 13 | VI | 48 | 49 | V | 12 | 14 | VII | 2 | XIII | 28 | IV | 38 IX 59 59 60 |
| { | Matt. VIII. | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | | 28 | 29 | 30 | 32 | 33 | 34 | IX. | 2 | 3 | |
| | Mark IV. | 37 | 38 | 39 | — | V. | 1 | 6 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 17 | II. | 4 | 8 | |
| { | Luke VIII. | 23 | 24 | — | 25 | | 26 | 28 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 37 | V. | 18 | — | |
| { | Matt. IX. | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | | | |
| | Mark II. | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 19 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 22 | | | |
| { | Luke V. | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | — | 30 | 31 | 33 | 34 | 36 | 37 | | | |
| { | Matt. IX. | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | X. | 1 | 2 | 14 | V. | 1 | 15 17 |
| | Mark II. | 23 | 24 | 25 | 28 | 34 | 38 | 39 | 41 | III. | 14 | 17 | VI. | — | 11 | XIII. 9 |
| { | Luke VIII. | 41 | 44 | 43 | — | 48 | 51 | 52 | — | | — | — | IX. | 5 | — | — |
| { | Matt. X. | 26 | | 35 | XI. | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 16 | 18 | 19 |
| | Mark IV. | 22 | | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| { | Luke | — | XIV. | 26 | VII. | 22 | 23 | 24 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 32 | 33 | 34 |
| { | Matt. XI. | 21 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 27 | XII. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 10 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| | Mark | — | — | — | — | — | II. | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | III. | 1 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| { | Luke X. | 13 | 14 | 15 | 21 | 22 | VI. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 6 | — | — | — |
| { | Matt. XII. | 24 | 25 | 26 | | 27 | 29 | 31 | | 32 | | 47 | 48 | XIII | 3 | 4 5 6 |
| | Mark III. | 22 | 24 | 26 | | — | 27 | 29 | | — | III. | 32 | 33 | IV. | 2 | 4 5 6 |
| { | Luke | — | — | — | XI. | 15 | — | — | XII. | 10 | VIII. | 20 | 21 | | 5 | — — 6 |
| { | Matt. XIII. | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | | 31 | 32 | 33 | |
| | Mark IV | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 20 | | 31 | 32 | — | |
| { | Luke VIII. | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | — | — | — | 13 | 14 | 15 | XIII. | 19 | 20 | 21 | |

| | | | |
|---------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| { Matt. XIII. | 54 55 57 58 | XIV. 2 | 3 4 6 7 8 9 10 11 |
| { Mark VI. | 2 3 4 5 | 14 | — 18 22 23 24 26 27 28 |
| { Luke | — — — — | IX. 7 | — — — — — — — |
| { Matt. XIV. | 12 13 14 15 16 | 17 19 20 21 22 23 24 | |
| { Mark VI. | 29 32 34 35 37 | 38 39 42 44 45 46 47 | |
| { Luke | — — — — — | IX. 13 14 17 | — — — — |
| { Matt. XIV. | 25 26 27 32 34 35 36 | XV. 2 3 4 5 7 | |
| { Mark VI. | 48 49 50 51 53 55 56 | VII. 5 9 10 11 6 | |
| { Luke | — — — — — | — — — — — | |
| { Matt. XV. | 8 9 10 11 | 14 21 22 26 27 28 29 30 31 | |
| { Mark VII. | 6 7 14 15 | — 24 25 27 28 30 31 32 37 | |
| { Luke | — — — — | VI. 39 | — — — — — |
| { Matt. XV. | 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 | XVI. 1 | 4 5 6 7 |
| { Mark VIII. | 2 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 11 | 12 14 15 16 |
| { Luke | — — — — — | — | XI. 29 30. — — |
| { Matt. XVI. | 8 9 10 11 | 13 14 15 20 21 22 23 24 25 | |
| { Mark VIII. | 17 19 20 21 | 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 | |
| { Luke | — — — — | IX. 18 19 20 | — — — — 23 24 |
| { Matt. XVI. | 26 27 | 28 XVII. 1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9 10 11 12 | |
| { Mark VIII. | 36 38 IX. 1 | 2 3 4 5 7 — 8 9 11 12 13 | |
| { Luke IX. | 25 26 | 27 | 28 29 30 33 35 36 — — — — |
| { Matt. XVII. | 14 15 17 19 | XVIII. 2 4 | 6 8 9 12 |
| { Mark IX. | 14 17 — 28 | 36 37 | 42 43 47 — |
| { Luke IX. | — 39 41 — | — — | XVII. 2 — — — XV. 4 |
| { Matt. XIX. | 1 3 5 6 8 | 13 15 16 17 | 18 19 20 21 |
| { Mark X. | 1 2 7 9 5 | 13 14 17 18 | XVIII. 20 19 20 21 |
| { Luke | — — — — | XVIII. 15 — 18 19 | 20 — 21 22 |
| { Matt. XIX. | 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 | XX. 19 | |
| { Mark XVIII. | 22 23 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 | — | |
| { Luke XVIII. | 23 — 25 26 27 28 — 29 — | 33 | |
| { Matt. XX. | 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 34 | | |
| { Mark X. | 35 37 38 39 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 51 52, | | |
| { Luke | — — — — — | | |
| { Matt. XXI. | 1 2 3 6 7 8 9 12 13 18 19 21 22 23 24 | | |
| { Mark XI. | 1 2 3 — 7 8 9 15 17 12 13 23 24 27 29 | | |
| { Luke XIX. | 29 30 31 32 33 35 — — — — — — — | | |
| { Matt. XXI. | 25 26 27 | 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 | 42 |
| { Mark XI. | 31 32 33 XII. 1 2 3 4 6 7 8 9 9 | | 10 |
| { Luke XIX. | — — — — | — — — — — | XX. 17 |
| { Matt. XXI. | 44 46 XXII. 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 | | |
| { Mark XI. | — — XII. 13 14 15 — 16 17 — 18 19 20 22 | | |
| { Luke XX. | 18 19 | 21 22 23 24 — 25 26 27 28 29 30 | |
| { Matt. XXII. | 27 28 29 30 32 42 44 45 | XXIII. 4 14 | 34 35 37 |
| { Mark XII. | 23 23 24 25 26 35 36 37 | — 40 | — — — |
| { Luke XX. | 32 33 34 35 38 41 42 — | 46 47 XI. 49 50 | XIII 34 |

| | | |
|----------------|---|----------|
| { Matt. XXIV. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 | |
| { Mark XIII. | 1 2 3 5 6 7 8 8 9 — 10 14 14 15 16 17 18 | |
| { Luke XXI. | 5 6 7 8 8 — — — — 17 — — 21 — — 23 — | |
| { Matt. XXIV. | 21 22 23 24 25 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 | 36 37 38 |
| { Mark XIII. | 19 20 20 22 23 24 26 27 28 29 30 31 | 32 — — |
| { Luke XXI. | — — — — — — 27 — 30 31 32 33 XXVII. | — 26 27 |
| { Matt. XXIV. | 45 46 47 48 50 XXVI. 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 | 14 |
| { Mark XIII. | — — — — — XIV. 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | 10 |
| { Luke XII. | 42 43 44 45 46 — — — — — — — XX. | 4 |
| { Matt. XXVI. | 15 16 17 18 20 21 22 23 24 26 27 28 29 | |
| { Mark XIV. | 11 12 12 14 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 | |
| { Luke XXII. | 5 6 — — 14 — — 21 22 — — 19 18 | |
| { Matt. XXVI. | 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 | |
| { Mark XIV. | 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 37 38 39 40 | |
| { Luke XXII. | — — — — 34 — — — 41 42 — — — — | |
| { Matt. XXVI. | 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 55 56 57 58 59 60 | |
| { Mark XIV. | 41 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 52 53 54 55 57 | |
| { Luke XXII. | — 46 — 47 — — — 50 52 — — 55 — — | |
| { Matt. XXVI. | 61 62 63 64 65 66 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 | |
| { Mark XIV. | 58 60 61 62 63 64 66 68 69 70 70 71 72 | |
| { Luke XXII. | — — — — — — 56 57 58 — 59 60 61 | |
| { Matt. XXVII. | 1 2 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 20 21 22 23 | |
| { Mark XV. | 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9 10 11 12 13 14 | |
| { Luke XXIII. | — 1 3 — — — — — — — 18 — 22 | |
| { Matt. XXVII. | 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 37 38 39 40 | |
| { Mark XV. | 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 26 27 29 30 | |
| { Luke XXIII. | — — — — — — 26 — — — 38 33 — — | |
| { Matt. XXVII. | 41 42 44 45 46 47 48 50 51 54 55 56 | |
| { Mark XV. | 31 — 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 | |
| { Luke XXIII. | — 35 — 45 46 — — — — 47 49 — | |
| { Matt. XXVII. | 57 58 59 60 61 XXVIII. 1 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| { Mark XV. | 43 44 46 46 47 XVI. 1 6 6 7 8 9 | |
| { Luke XXIII. | 51 52 53 53 — XXIV. 1 — — — 9 — | |

A careful reading of these comparisons will show that Matthew's report is almost entirely the same as Mark's. There are a few incidents and expressions at the beginning which do not tally, but the similarity of the rest is remarkable. The two accounts vary, only in regard to the time and circumstances under which certain occurrences took place. The impossibility of for two writers to correspond in such a striking manner, without having consulted together or

copied from each other, cannot be denied, and the only question is as to who actually supplied the data for these works.

The fact that Matthew has some reports which correspond with those of Luke, and which are not reported by Mark, tends to complicate the question. The comparison of the writings of Mark and Luke evidently show that these two consulted together or copied from the same original, and the same has undoubtedly been the case with Matthew and Mark. But since Matthew and Luke only agree in some details we must conclude that these two had no special consultation with each other as to what they should write, but that Mark, the pliable tool of Paul, was the principal author, and supplied the other two with the materials for their respective works.

To strengthen the belief in the mysterious rumors about the life of Christ, Mark gathered the fables together—although cautioned by Paul to heed them—and delivered them to those interested in the promulgation of Christ's doctrine. Matthew and Luke added to this what they knew of themselves or had gathered in their travels.

Luke's book, we notice, is not so full of incidents as that of Matthew or Mark, or possibly Mark made alterations and additions to his memoranda subsequently, and before supplying Matthew with it.

In regard to Matthew's narrative of the Passion, which again widely differs from that of Luke, we must suppose that the latter, having been in Jerusalem, pretended to his own opinion. However, none of them relate the occurrence from personal observation. It is hardly worth while to discuss the miracles referred to by Matthew, most of them have been already discussed in our consideration of other parts of the gospels. We cannot, however, pass over some of those which originated with Matthew himself.

Chap. xxvii, verse 51. *And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;*

52. *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,*

53. *And came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

Such an earthquake would not easily be forgotten, so how is it that Mark and Luke never referred to it? In connection with this earthquake, Matthew says that saints came up out of their graves. If this were really so, it was a more wonderful resurrection than that of Christ, as these saints had been dead for years. But who were these saints, who revealed of them, and what became of them afterwards?

The following, too, has a tendency to excite one's suspicion.

Chap. xxvii, verse 63. *Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.*

64. *Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.*

How can it be that the Pharisees and priests should have remembered that which according to Luke was spoken to his disciples in Galilee.

This was only remembered by the disciples after Christ's death.

Luke, Chap. xxiv, verse 6. *He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee.*

Verse 8. *And they remembered His words.*

Then another great earthquake occurs, but does not seem to have done much damage or achieved anything except assisting a poor weak angel to roll the stone from the sepulchre.

Chap. xxviii, verse 2. *And behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.*

And how came it known that the chief priests had bribed the soldiers, as this was a secret understanding.

Chap. xxviii, verse 11. *Now when they were going, be-*

hold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

12. *And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers.*

13. *Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.*

Verse 15. *So they took the money, and did, as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

The Jews apparently knew that the body was stolen and hid away, but accused the disciples of having done it, and this rumor was set about. The disciples were conscious of their innocence and therefore believed the body had arisen.

This, on the face of it, seems to be a reasonable proposition. Mark and Luke appear to have known nothing about the securing of a guard, and this bribery of the soldiery. Matthew alone gives us not only the fable of the resurrection, but plainly shows for what reason it was first disseminated, namely, to shield the stealing of Christ's body.

In regard to the reappearance of Christ, a rumor naturally following the fable of His resurrection, Matthew is more explicit than Luke or Mark, but manages to tell a different story of this event. The former give the place of assumption as Jerusalem, he states that the eleven disciples went straightway into Galilee, to a place where Christ had appointed to meet them. Chap. xxviii, verse 16. "*Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, unto a mountain where Jesus appointed them.*"

How is it that these three evangelists differ so widely in their statements? Can the defenders of the Bible maintain that they were inspired by a divine spirit to write these things? Common human reason and intelligence can have but one answer to these questions; that if it had been divinely inspired all the reports would have been in harmony and correct.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

The Gospel of John is the most perplexing and mysterious communication regarding Christ that we have. If we entertained any doubt as to the statements of the former evangelists, based partly on the fact that they wrote not from their own knowledge or personal observation, we cannot doubt John for the same reason. From many expressions in his writings we must concede that John was the contemporary and the disciple of Christ of that name.

In this Gospel we notice at once the grand and lofty expressions which charmed us in his epistles. He forms a marked contrast to Paul in every way. Paul was energetic, commanding, selfish, and entirely devoid of human love; John was humble, good-natured, gentle, and highly imaginative. Such people seldom deliberate, they act upon impulse, which is influenced by present circumstances. They are of innocent nature, exempt from distrust or suspicion, and have no conception of the intrigues and deception practiced by those around them. They are easily led to believe the most astonishing representations, because they rely upon those who have gained their confidence, instead of thinking for themselves. Such characters are often given to superstition and religious fanaticisms. And of such was John.

John was endowed with the sweet vanity peculiar to such natures, and fancied he was beloved by all who knew him. He believes that he was especially beloved by Christ, and therefore mentions it repeatedly.

Chap. xiii, verse 23. *Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

25. *He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it ?*

Chap. xix, verse 26. *When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!*

Chap. xxi, verse 20. *Then Peter turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved.*

The author wishes to state at this point that the foregoing idea of John's character is not purely imaginary; comparison of the character of John having been made with one of the author's own experience. The energetic and enlightened man will only believe that which he witnesses himself and what by his calculations and investigations he is convinced is the truth; while the ignorant, unsubstantial, weak-minded class concede their belief to all things they cannot explain or contradict, and will rather accept the most wonderful representations simply because the reality is incomprehensible to them. Therefore, superstition enters into them, and chokes all energetic thought.

It is to this peculiarity of character that we ascribe the possibility of John's belief in the occurrences he reports to us. Most of them he must have gained from common rumor, but he speaks of them with a conviction based on personal observation. We cannot suppose that Christ chose His twelve disciples at the very commencement of His career. Some had most probably been with Him for some time; others had accepted His teachings more recently. John was, according to evidence, one of the latter, and therefore could not have personally witnessed many of the earlier miracles he describes.

Before we enter upon a discussion of "the gospel of St. John," however, let us consider at what period it was written, considering the rest of the communications by the same author. We may presume that the Epistles were written first, because several essential doctrines of Christ to

be found in the gospel are not noticed there. The absence of reference to the miracles of Christ may also be taken as additional proof of this. He had not then considered these rumored miracles. Afterwards, being induced by his own inspiration or by the persuasion of others, to write about the life of Christ, he could not omit the fables concerning Him. The credibility to be attached to these have to be guaged by the connecting circumstances.

John, we have to bear in mind, was sincerely devoted to Christ, and believed Him to be the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Consequently everything which occurred to him in relation to Christ, was represented from this point of view. According to this theory the rumor that John the Baptist had revealed Christ, and prepared the way for Him, might have been considered probable. This could not be refuted by John the Baptist any way, as he was long since dead.

John, Chap. i, verse 15. *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

Chap i, verse 27. *He it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*

John may well have preached the near approach of the Messiah, as this was the general belief among the Jews at all times, according to the Old Testament, and these predictions were endeavored to be twisted in verification of Christ. John the Baptist, however, as proven before, had not recognized and believed in Christ the Messiah, although this is attributed to him.

Chap. i, verse 33. *And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*

Neither could he have recorded this:

Chap. i, verse 34. *And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

because John continued to have his own disciples.

Chap. iii, verse 25. *Then there arose a question between some of Johns disciples and the Jews about purifying.*

Chap. iv, verse 1. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John.*

This special sect of John the Baptist's continued up to Paul's time, and even at that time were at variance with the followers of Christ, according to the statements of Paul and other evangelists. If John had recognized Christ, he would have been an adherent of Him, and advised his followers that Christ was the Messiah whose advent he preached, and there only salvation. But instead of this he continued to promulgate the same doctrine as before Christ's appearance.

Chap. iii, verse 26. *And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.*

27. *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it is given him from heaven.*

Chap. iii, verse 30. *He must increase but I must decrease.*

This is evidently a distortion of the teachings of John, and the words "to whom thou bearest witness" have been inserted to make it more effectual.

The recognition of Christ by John the Baptist as set forth even here, is too contradictory to be reliable.

Chap. i, verse 26, says: *John answered them saying I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not. He it is who coming after me, is preferred before me!*

And on the very day following he is made to say.

Chap i, verse 29. *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!*

Verse 31. *And I knew Him not but that He should be manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.*

32. *And John bare record, saying, I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove and it abode upon Him.*

33. *And I knew Him not.*

Yet all this former knowledge of Christ, personally or otherwise, is denied. Chap. i, verse 31. "*And I knew Him not, but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.*" Chap. i, verse 33. "*And I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*"

This seems to indicate that there existed doubt as to whether John the Baptist had really recognized Christ as the Messiah, and explains the vacillating way in which John refers to the point. That the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist is not mentioned here may be a neglect of John, but in all probability was purposely omitted because it struck the writer that it would scarcely do well for Christ to be baptized by his inferior. On the contrary, John the Baptist, if he accepted Christ and His doctrines, should be baptized by Him. John, therefore, states this as an actual occurrence. Chap. iii, verse 23. "*And John also was baptized in Aenon, near to Salim, because there was much water there. And they came [among them John the Baptist] and were baptized.*"

Consequently, on what occasion the Spirit descended upon Christ is hard to determine.

The first disciples of Christ, according to John, were the two who left John the Baptist. Chap. i, verse 37. "*And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*"

One was Andrew, the name of the other is not mentioned.

Chap. i, verse 40. *One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*

These two it must be kept in mind, did not follow Christ at the instigation of John the Baptist, but voluntarily left the latter upon hearing Christ speak.

The next disciple mentioned is Simon Peter.

Chap. i, verse 42. *And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the Son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.*

Then Philip and Nathaniel are mentioned.

Chap. i, verse ¶ 43. . *The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.*

Chap. i, verse 48. *Nathaniel saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.*

49. *Nathaniel answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.*

We cannot but consider these hasty conversions remarkable, especially that of Nathaniel, who was convinced at once that Christ was the Son of Glory and the King of Israel, simply because Christ told him that he noticed him sitting under the fig tree. Christ Himself, according to the story, believed this conversion to be based upon wonderfully small premises.

Chap. i, verse 50. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee. I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.*

51. *And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*

In this promise Nathaniel seems to have been disappointed, for at no time, according to John, does he see angels descending upon Christ.

In comparing John's report with the apparently corresponding parts of the other three evangelists, we at once observe how essentially he is at variance with them; indeed, they are all at variance, and it is a puzzle to which there seems to be no solution, as to which reliance can be placed upon. However, we will not endeavor here to prove the improbability of their histories by citing the many contra-

dictions of each other, but consider John's statement upon its own merits entirely.

The first miracle he attributes to Christ is peculiar in its character and insignificant in its results. Christ, as it is alleged, was invited with His disciples to a marriage in Cana, where also His mother was present. Chap. ii, verse 1. *“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana at Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.”*

After the guests had feasted for some time, the supply of wine fell short. Now, although Jesus had but just commenced His mission, and had not yet demonstrated that He was possessed of any specially marvellous gifts; His mother knew of them. She was convinced that all power was in His hand, so when the wine run short, she had confidence that He could remedy the deficiency, and also, like a naturally good mother, was glad of this opportunity for Him to show off His wonderful powers. She therefore informs Jesus that there is no more wine, confident that He will at once furnish more as a matter of course.

Chap. ii, verse 3. *And when they wanted wine the mother of Jesus said unto Him: they have no wine.*

Jesus reproaches His mother with sharp words for her temptation, adding that His time to show these powers of which she knew, was not yet come.

Chap. ii, verse 4. *Jesus said unto her—woman what have I to do with thee? Mine hour has not yet come.*

His mother, however, is confident that He will not take amiss what she has said, but will do this thing what she has asked, so she gives orders to the servant to do whatever Jesus shall suggest.

Verse 5. *His mother said unto the servant, Whatever He saith unto you, do it.*

Jesus, it seems, could not resist the temptation, and ordered the pots to be filled with water.

Chap. ii, verse 7. *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

There were six of these pots, which seems to have been of good size.

Chap. ii, verse 6. *And there were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins a piece.*

Then this water, probably by means of prayers, was turned into wine.

Chap. ii, verse 9. *When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom.*

Now the feasting and debauchery could be continued.

This was the miracle with which Christ inaugurated His mission. If any credit could be attached to the story, we should say that Christ had no experience as yet of the character of His mission, and availed Himself of this opportunity to try what manner of tricks He could play when "his hour" was come.

We can hardly believe, however, that Christ would be guilty of such an imprudence as this miracle shows. It would have been a gross error to have sought the glorification of Himself and His God in a society of wine-flushed merry-makers, and it would no doubt have effected a very different purpose from that which, according to John, was intended.

Chap. ii, verse 11. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him.*

No, if we entertain any reverence at all for Christ's character, we cannot believe that this really happened. It is either a fabrication on the part of John, or one of the many idle rumors about Christ, which to suit some purpose he adopted for his book.

Christ by all accounts rapidly acquired a notoriety, and became Himself convinced of His divine mission and authority. He takes upon Himself to redress a grievance of the religious Jews, namely, the selling and buying daily carried on within the sacred precincts of the temple.

Chap. ii, verse 15. *And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables.* When asked what show of authority He had for this action, He delivered Himself, according to John, of a very meaningless piece of bombast.

Chap. iii, verse 18. *Then answered the Jews and said unto Him: What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things. Jesus answered and said unto them, des'roy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."*

This "sign" by no means satisfied the Jews; it was a riddle they were unable to understand. Chap. ii, verse 20.

"Then said the Jews, forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days."

Christ, in reply, spoke of a sign to come after some years, which would justify His present authority, and the Jews had only to wait for this. The imaginative John, however, believes that Christ did not answer the question of the Jews, but spoke only of the temple—whatever that may be—of His own body. Chap. ii, verse 21. *"But He spake of the temple of His body."* The disciples remembered, or professed to remember, this saying of Christ about building the temple in three days, and applied it to the resurrection as a proof of the fulfillment of His own saying.

Chap. ii, verse 22. *When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them, and they believed the Scriptures and the word which Jesus had said.*

Even if it be true that Jesus did make such a vain glorious and bombastic remark, there is nothing to show that he intended a double meaning, and the construction here placed upon it was not thought of until after His death. The purpose of placing such a construction upon these words is obvious. This, and other ingenious efforts to make the Scriptures tally with the time Christ was in the grave, however, have one defect. They do not agree as to time, for Christ being laid in the grave Friday night, and risen

or carried away early Sunday morning, was only in the sepulchre two nights and one day, instead of the alleged prophetic three days.

After astonishing the dealers in the Temple, Christ continued performing miracles, on account of which we read, many believed on Him. Chap. ii, verse 23. *"Now, when He was in Jerusalem, at the Passover, in the first day, many believed on His name, when they saw the miracles which He did."*

This seems to indicate that miracles were a very common performance, and that they were so numerous, it is not worth while to allude to them in detail. But the following statement is a direct contradiction of this assumption.

Chap. iv, verse 46. *So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.*

Chap. iv, verse 53. *So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house.*

54. *This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judea into Galilee.*

It is clearly shown in the previous verse that after turning the water into wine, He worked no other miracles until that time when the second miracle was performed, and shows how little John's statements are to be relied upon, in a general way.

The little story about Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, coming to Jesus at night-time, for the sake of having a conversation with Him, is of no importance, and may or may not be true. Probably the man had heard much of Christ, and wished to see and hear Him, but for fear of losing his official position, did not care to be seen conversing with Christ, and came by night. There is nothing wonderful in this, nor in the conversation which is supposed to have taken place between the two, but which occurrence may have been remembered.

The same may be said of the utterances of John the Baptist, which this disciple reports.

Chap. iii, verse 29. *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

30. *He must increase, but I must decrease*, and so on.

Leaving out of consideration the equivocal expressions and position in which John the Baptist is placed by these speeches, it is difficult, however, to explain how John the Evangelist, if he had been the steady companion of Christ, came to the knowledge of the exact utterances of John the Baptist, and was able to report them with such exactness. The same may be said of the following:

Chap. iii, verse 25. ¶ *Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.*

26. *And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.*

But this whole paragraph is faulty in construction. It maintains that John has his own disciples, who followed him in his wanderings beyond the Jordan, although they professed that he bore witness to Christ. If we omit the words, "*To whom thou bearest witness,*" the paragraph would be more comprehensible, and we may suggest that this was inserted to assert John's alliance to Christ.

The incident with the Samaritan woman is almost ridiculous. Chap. iv, verse 7. "*There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water,*" and while His disciples are absent, Christ talked with her. Chap. iv, verse 8. "*For the disciples were gone away to the city to buy meat.*" Chap. iv, verse 27. "¶ *And upon this came His disciples, and marvelled that He talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest Thou? or, Why talkest Thou with her?*"

How the conversation Christ had with the woman, came to the knowledge of the disciples is not very clear, unless

they obtained it from the woman herself, for it is not likely that Christ would boast of it to them.

Singular, however, it must appear that this woman at once considered Him to be a prophet, simply because He had told her some incidents of her life, which could surely have been no secret in the place she lived. Chap. iv, verse 18. *For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband ; in that sayest thou truly. The woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet."*

As to the conversation itself, all that Christ had told her might have been generally known, and she was only surprised that one she had not seen before, and who presumably did not belong to the city should know these things, though He might have been there before.

In telling the story she would naturally exaggerate certain parts in order to express her wonder. The sequence is therefore not altogether surprising. Chap. iv, verse 39. *"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman which testified : He told me all that ever I did."* We may presume there must have been many secret things in her life beside those which Christ spoke to her about.

When Christ had remained two days with the Samaritans, although He worked no miracles, they believed from his teachings alone that He was indeed the Messiah. In every other place miracles were essential to conversion ; in this case it was in spite of His demonstration to the woman, upon which they evidently placed little faith anyhow.

Chap. iv, verse 42. *And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying ; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

Evidently the Samaritans were even more simple and credulous than the people Christ usually addressed, for there seems to be no real cause for their sudden conversion. The past life of the woman, as told by Christ, finds a corollary

in the present day in what is called clairvoyance. There are thousands of impostors who profess to have the power of describing past, and even future events in one's life, and thousands of people believe in their powers. So that if we accept Christ upon such an alleged miraculous demonstration as this, we place ourselves upon a level with those whose foolish credulity supports the clairvoyant and spiritualistic impostors of to-day. Such stories as these rather detract from the veracity of the Gospel than add to the glory of Christ.

The story of the miracle performed upon the son of a nobleman Chap. iv, verse 51. *And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.*

52. *Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him,* has little foundation in fact.

There is no evidence that the disciples ever saw this son, either before or after his convalescence, and none could have witnessed the intercourse of the nobleman with his servants or heard his words. To tell such fables is easy; they may be interesting reading; but to elevate them into matters for divine adoration is childish.

The miracle performed upon the man with infirmities for thirty-eight years, at the pool of Bethesda, has something more remarkable about it. This, if it ever occurred, might have been witnessed by the disciples. But that an angel should come down from heaven once in a while, in order to "trouble" the water, is an old time fable. Chap. v, verse 4. *"For an angel went down at certain seasons into the pool and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had."* This belief may have existed among the ignorant. If such occurrences did take place, then miracles were common, and no special importance can be attached to those worked by Christ. Many of them, indeed, are trifling, compared to an angel descending direct from heaven.

If there was such a pool of Bethesda, where a multitude of superstitious cripples and sick people were waiting for the angel to trouble the water, in order that they might jump in and be cured, why should Christ have selected this one man for a demonstration of His power, and cruelly ignore the other sufferers.

Chap. v, verse 3. *In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.*

Why should Christ have shown this very partial benevolence? This one man was justified to no more special consideration than any of the rest; because none of them knew anything of Him.

And, while wandering among the sick multitude at the head of His disciples, He seems to have excited no curiosity or comment on account of this occurrence.

Chap. v, verse 11. *He answered them, he that made me whole, the same said unto me, take up thy bed and walk.*

12. *Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?*

13. *And he that was healed wist not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude bring in that place.*

Then again he knew it was Jesus. Chap. v, verse 15. *"The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole."* All at once they tried to kill Jesus. Verse 16. *"And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day."*

Surely the speaking of those few words, "Take up thy bed and walk," and the doing of such a benevolent action, could not have aroused the anger of these pious Jews. A short time before, too, Christ had driven the money-changers from the Temple, and they then recognized His authority; why not here?

Surely they could not so soon have forgotten that incident. Neither could they have acted out of malice toward Christ,

as they apparently did not know Him, and the occurrence itself could not have afforded sufficient cause.

Two remarkable incidents connected with this story could not fail to excite our attention. It must seem peculiar that this man who was suddenly healed after many years of suffering, neither gave thanks or entertained any gratitude for his relief. He goes off without even inquiring who cured him, and the conversations are reported which the man had with the Jews after he had departed.

We may judge that great pains were taken to represent this miracle, but the whole account is too indefinite and confused to be accepted, and seems to have been reported from mere rumor rather than by an eye-witness.

In the next chapter it is stated with emphasis that Christ worked numbers of miracles.

Chap. vi, verse 2. *And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased.*

It is strange, however, that John refers to them only in general, while in some few mysterious cases the details are carefully given. This seems to indicate that the rumors of Christ's miracles were without end, but that in only a few cases could anything approaching real facts be obtained.

The miracle of feeding the multitude is one of the few miracles reported also, in much the same words by the other evangelists.

Chap. vi, verse 7. *Philip answered Him, Two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.*

This miracle we have discussed before, but we cannot refrain from drawing attention here to the superficial way in which this marvellous occurrence is related. Christ observes a great company coming unto Him, and at once suggests the difficulty of feeding them. There is evidently attached more importance to the working of this miracle than to the object of the multitude in coming there.

The teachings of Christ, which we would expect to be the

principle feature of such a gathering, are not alluded to at all. The special object of the story, at all events, seems to be to place on record a miracle.

The next miracle, that of Christ's walking on the sea, is an imaginary incident, which John has not told in the clearest possible manner.

Chap. vi, verse 17. *And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.*

This, it is alleged, was witnessed by a multitude.

Chap. vi, verse 22. *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone.*

Christ Himself had gone into the mountains.

Chap. vi, verse 15. *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain, Himself alone.*

How He managed to escape from the multitude that wished to make Him a king is not stated. This must be one of the miracles which John has omitted to reveal as such.

The next day people came from Tiberia, a distant place to see Christ, and notwithstanding that it was known He had gone into the mountains, and surely could not be expected to be on the other side of the sea, seeing there were no boats to convey Him; nevertheless they went over to find Him.

Chap. vi, verse 24. *When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.*

But how could they go there seeking for Christ when they had definite knowledge that He was in another place? Probably they were moved by miraculous inspiration.

One of the most conflicting elements in the story is the various points from which the occurrence is described; it

seems as though the narrator must have been omnipresent. For instance, he is at first one of the disciples in the boat, and describes the scene from that point.

Chap. vi, verse 19. *So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.*

20. *But He saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.*

Two or three verses further on He seems to have got back to shore, and to be reporting it from that standpoint.

Chap. vi, verse 22. *The day following when the people which stood on the other side of the sea, saw there was no other boat there, save the one whereinto His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone.*

Again, he relates what occurred to those who came from Tiberias, from another point of view.

Chap. vi, verse 23. *Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks.*

24. *When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took to shipping.*

His further association with Christ, and what occurred to them on the other side, is entirely left out of consideration.

If such an occurrence is reported by one, who had really been present in the boat, we should expect him to write of what might possibly come under his own observation, we would expect him to relate how they started, how Christ appeared to them, and how surprised the people, on the other side were, to see Christ. But this long story of what the narrator could not possibly have seen, unless He could be in more than one place at a time, is confuse and ridiculous.

In the miracle of the blind man recovering his sight, the most important evidence is the conversation between the man and his parents, and the Jews and Pharisees all outside occurrences.

Chap. ix, verse 1. *And as Jesus passed by He saw a man who was blind from his birth.*

8. *The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?*

9. *Some said, This is he: others said, He is like Him: but he said, I am he.*

10. *Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?*

11. *He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

12. *Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.*

13. *They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.*

14. *And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.*

15. *Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.*

16. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.*

17. *They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.*

18. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.*

19. *And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?*

20. *His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:*

21. *But by what means he now seeth, we know not ; or who hath opened his eyes we know not : he is of age ; ask him : he shall speak for himself.*

22. *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews ; for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.*

23. *Therefore said his parents, He is of age ; ask him.*

24. *Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise : we know that this man is a sinner.*

25. *He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not ; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*

26. *Then said they to him again, What did he to thee ? how opened he thine eyes ?*

27. *He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear ; wherefore would ye hear it again ? will ye also be his disciples ?*

28. *Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art His disciple ; but we are Moses' disciples.*

29. *We know that God spake unto Moses ; as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is.*

30. *The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes.*

31. *Now we know that God heareth not sinners : but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him he heareth.*

32. *Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.*

38. *If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

34. *They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us ? And they cast him out.*

The cured man knew that the name of the person through

whom he had recovered was Jesus, but he did not know who or where He was, and had not even thanked Him.

Chap. ix, verse 11. *He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Si'oam, and wash : and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

12. *Then said they unto him, Where is he ? He said, I know not.*

When He was put out of the temple, Jesus, Himself, took pains to find him, and confessed to him who He was, and the man acknowledged and worshipped Him.

Chap. ix, verse 35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out ; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God ?*

36. *He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him ?*

37. *And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.*

38. *And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

His parents knew exactly who Christ was, and what was thought of Him, but they refused to speak of it, for fear of the anger of the Jews.

Chap. ix, verse 22. *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews : for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.*

Then again the Jews profess to have no knowledge of Christ.

Chap. ix, verse 29. *We know that God spake unto Moses ; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.*

From a previous avowal, however, it appears that the cured man did know Christ, and that he wondered why the Jews did not know Him.

Chap. ix, verse 27. *He answered them I have told you already, and ye did not hear : wherefore would ye hear it again ? will ye also be his disciples ?*

30. *The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.*

Also, the Pharisees must have known Christ, as they accuse Him of being a sinner.

Chap. ix, verse 24. *Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.*

The whole account is so confused and contradictory that it seems useless to endeavor to explain it, and we are fain to follow the advice of Paul in regard to it, and heed not "these old wives' fables."

Now with regard to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The first thought that strikes one is that such a marvellous performance as this, could have escaped the notice of others, who essayed to chronicle Christ's wondrous doings. Paul, not only makes no mention of it, but expresses an emphatic opinion that there never was and never could be such a thing as bodily resurrection.

We wonder, too, if this was the final resurrection of Lazarus, and whether after this he disappeared in some wondrous way, as Christ did after His resurrection; or whether he existed for some time after, as an ordinary mortal, and then died again. Assuming that Christ did raise him, what the great purpose of such an act? It represents to have been the result of a mere whim on Christ's part, actuated by purely personal feeling. We cannot suppose that he found such tricks necessary to the establishment of His reputation as a divine; nor can we believe, if we believe in Christ as a God, that an Infallible Being would upset nature's laws, without a purpose—as is the case here.

The proceedings at the house of Lazarus must be accepted as purely imaginary, as none of the disciples could have been present according to John's showing, to make record of them.

Chap. xi, verse 28. *And when she had so said, she went*

her way, and called Mary her sister secretly saying, the Master is come and calleth for thee.

29. *As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.*

30. *Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.*

31. *The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her saying, she goeth unto the grave to weep there.*

This is very minute indeed, considering the circumstances before mentioned, and John to crown his audacious imaginings of the scene, refers to an indefinite public as the witnesses.

Chap. xii, verse 17. *The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.*

This proves that John was not a witness of the miracle, as he refers to the record of others.

To confirm the actions of Christ showing them to have been in accordance with God's will, a special miracle was deemed necessary, and this occurred in a vague manner.

Chap. xii, verse 28. *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

The people who stood near by, and to whose ears this was particularly addressed, failed to catch the words or the alleged reply.

Chap. xii, verse 29. *The people therefore that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*

This may have been a real occurrence to some extent. Christ may have imagined that the occasional thunder was a direct answer to His prayer, and may have in all good faith communicated this idea to His followers. Some of the bystanders, however, did not believe it, but considered the sound was that of thunder simply.

Of the seven miracles reported by John only two are similar in import to some of those reported by other evangelists. The seven are—The transformation of water into wine, the cure of the nobleman's son from a fever, the cure of the infirm man by the pool of Bethesda, the feeding of five thousand people, Christ walking on the sea, the blind man restored to sight, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The two which are to an extent corroborated by the other evangelists are—the cure of the nobleman's son, and the feeding of five thousand people.

With this exception the whole gospel differs from any of the others. The parables, and even the doctrines differ in so many essential points from those recorded by the other apostles, that it is impossible to trace them to the same origin. John's gospel in this respect may be said to possess more originality than any of the other three, but for the most of his statements there appears to be just as little real foundation.

And now we have something to say in regard to the doctrines John promulgates, many of which it is impossible to believe were revealed to him by Christ—as he would wish us to infer, but were exaggerated ideas of John. Nevertheless Christ possibly believed, especially in the later stage of His activity, that He was a great prophet, or even the Son of God, and His teachings were in conformity with such imagined dignity. Some credulous people may also have conceded to this assumption, but others again, who were formerly adherents to His new doctrines, left Him when he made, or there was made for him, the lofty pretension to divinity.

Chap. vi. verse 66. *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

It was noticed that the desertion from His ranks was so great that even Christ viewed with alarm this decrease of His popularity.

Chap. vi. verse 67. *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?*

68. *Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

This answer does not prove that Christ was the divinity they would have us suppose, but simply that Peter was one of the few who believed in Him.

We have still stronger evidence for a disinclination to believe in Jesus as the Christ in the conduct of his brothers.

Chap. viii, verse 5. *For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

We may presume that His brothers would know Him better than anybody else; and if there had been the slightest reason for such assumption of divinity, they would have been the first to recognize it. On the contrary, they appeared to Him slighted, both Him and His pretensions.

Chap. vii, verse 3. *His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.*

If they had seen any miraculous works performed by Him, they would surely have been among his most ardent followers; and if Jesus really had all power in Him, His first duty and His natural inclination would be to save from eternal damnation His own relatives.

The doctrines attributed to Christ by John are of a most singular character. They are all bearing upon the glorification and personal elevation of Christ Himself. The most fanatical theories are set forth to secure an unconditional acceptance of Him and His divine mission.

Chap. iii, verse 18. *He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Chap. vi, verse 51. *I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give, is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

52. *The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying—How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*

Chap. iv, verse 55. *For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*

56. *He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.*

These are incongruous doctrines and seem to admit of so many explanations, that it is needless to add to them. We might ask why should gospel truths be promulgated in the form of conundrums to be guessed at? And there leave it.

Then this gospel insinuates into one's mind that Christ selected as His own betrayer one of His own disciples. Chap. vi, verse 71. "*He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the Son of Simons for he it was who should betray Him, being one of the twelve.*" Christ must have known this at the time He selected Judas, as one of the twelve; if so, Christ was an accessory to the treason of Judas, and was even more to blame than Judas himself. To be bosom friend with a man until you know his weakness, and then to deliberately set the temptation of so horrible a crime in his path, is the act of a fiend. But it has a worse look in this case, if we believe the whole transaction as the Bible records it. Christ knew long before that Judas would do this detestable thing, and yet treated the cowardly traitor with every show of esteem and brotherly love; nay, further, we are to believe that Christ predestined him from the beginning to play this revolting part and to have the contumely of centuries heaped upon his name. Does such evidence in any way support Christ's claims to divinity? Is there even anything manly in such conduct? However, this point has been discussed before.

That Christ was not altogether free in His wanderings, but had often to journey alone and in secrecy, is shown by the following:

Chap. vii, verse 3. *His brethren therefore said unto him Depart hence and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.*

Chap. vii, verse 10. *But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up into the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.*

And that He was compelled to wander secretly and alone shows that the apostles were not always in the company of Christ, as it is supposed, and could not therefore record all His proceedings with the details John garnishes his reports withal.

The anointment of Christ by Mary may have been a real occurrence, inasmuch as Christ had many devoted followers, and also because it was an old Jewish custom as a sign of devotion.

Chap. xii, verse 3. *Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.*

Judas protested against the waste of such costly oil.

Chap. xii, verse 4. *Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him.*

5. *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?*

All this, as well as Christ's rebuke of his suggestion,

Verse 7. *Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of My burying hath she kept this.*

8. *For the poor always ye have with you: but Me ye have not always.*

may be strictly in accordance with the facts. Judas liked to get hold of money, as it was for this that he betrayed Christ.

The entrance of Christ into Jerusalem, riding on a young ass, and being hailed by a large crowd, as The Prince of Peace, may also be true. This statement we find corroborated by the other evangelists, and it may have been a well known fact.

Chap. xii, verse 13. *Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried: Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

14. *And Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon: as it is written.*

Also, John claimed that this was prophesied in the Old

Scripture, and its fulfillment was accepted as a proof that Jesus was really the promised Messiah.

Chap. xii, verse 15 (and Zachariah, Chap. ix, verse 9.) *Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.*

There seems to be no doubt, therefore, that Christ rode into Jerusalem in this manner in consequence of the prophecy, and in order that it might be fulfilled. The adopting of such a character by Christ, and in so public a manner increased the smouldering hate of the Scribes and Pharisees against this fanatic, who preached against Moses and the Prophets, and this may have hurried the climax and the tragic finale of His career. The offer of the sordid Judas to deliver Christ into their hands, for a price, came at an opportune moment, and they readily embraced it. Judas knew the habits of Christ and of the disciples, and was therefore able to accomplish this, by no means easy task, on account of his increased popularity. Judas carried out his bargain, as we know, by a careful plan, and Christ was captured in the darkness of night, and the lonely solitude of Gethsemane. After this the ardent devotion of the disciples to Christ increased. John, who was probably present at the Last Supper, developed into a Christain of the most fanatical type after witnessing the persecution to which leader was subjected, which is proved by his sincere expressions.

Chap. xiii, verse 23. *Now there was leaning on Jesus bosom, one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

Chap. xix, verse 26. *When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He said mother, women, behold thy son!*

27. *Then said He to the disciple, Beho'd thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

Chap. xx, verse 2. *Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved.*

Chap. xix, verse 7. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.*

Chap. xxi. verse 20. *Then Peter, turneth about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following :*

John's presence at the proceedings and special connection with Christ, is here obviously demonstrated by his alleged actions and egotistic expressions. He is evidently proud of his close intimacy with the Martyr, which he never before signified so straightforwardly. His exalted conduct shows that he had assumed a different aspect in regard to his relations with Christ, and therefore, we must conclude that at this point he really became intimate with Him, which he had not been before. His reports from this point have a higher sense of responsibility, and therefore we must assume that all his former reports, which have been alluded to from the beginning, were not the results of what he himself had witnessed.

About the Lord's dinner, John has very little to say, and only mentions that which specially refers to Judas. He does not notice that they are celebrating any particular feast, and commences his narrative at a point near the end of the supper.

Chap. xiii, verse 2. *And supper being ended, (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son to betray Him.)*

He then describes the foot washing and says,

Chap. xiii, verse 4. *"He riseth from supper and laid aside His garments ; and took a towel and girded himself.*

After this and toward the close of the same chapter the supper, according to John, seems to have recommenced.

Chap. xiii, verse 26. *Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.*

John seems to be anything but clear as to the proceedings at the feast, and shows evident effort to turn the account in some shape. The foot washing happened after dinner, and Judas must have been present at the time, as he received his last sup later, and is referred to by Christ, as the one unclean amongst them.

Chap. xiii, verse 11. *For he knew who should betray him ; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

John immediately afterward describes incidents which were taking place again at the dinner. Christ, apprehensive of coming trouble, desired to show some special act of fellowship to his disciples, and hence, the feet washing, Christ may have suspected some plan was in operation against Him, and knowing Judas' character thoroughly, have distrusted him, and hinted His distrust to the rest. He may even have upbraided Judas, and this might have raised the latter's anger instead of mollifying it, and determined him to immediately carry into effect what he had been meditating. It would be interesting to know whether Judas really was present and had his feet washed by Christ, for to this ceremony was attached great significance.

Chap. xiii, verse 8. *Peter said unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me.*

But on this point John does not enlighten us much. However, he could not have represented Judas as being present without making of Christ a hypocrite, when Christ knew of the perfidy of Judas all along.

To explain this conundrum, we must suggest that the so-called Lord's dinner rather took a regular course. Judas, having been offended, left during or at the end ; subsequently the foot-washing followed. But Peter would not allow Christ to wash his feet, in consequence of which some altercation occurred between him and Christ, which, however, in its meaning, did not allude to Judas, who had left.

We have again to refer to the omniscience of John, who not only shows an acquaintance with matters that could not possibly come under his observation, but also claims to know the very thoughts of the chief rulers, and the exact moment when the devil personally entered into the heart of Judas.

Chap. xii, verse 42. *Nevertheless, among the chief rulers*

also many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.

Chap. xiii, verse 2. *And supper being ended, the devil now having put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.*

After these evidences of the force of John's imagination we have a strong right to assume that the whole of his gospel is padded out in the same way.

John next describes a discourse at great length (from Chap. xiv to Chap. xviii), which Christ addressed to His followers. How he could remember this for years, and reproduce it, as it purports to be, in the exact words of Christ, is marvellous. The discourse, however, if one comes to examine it, has less the appearance of an extempore address, delivered at a time when the speaker was filled with emotion and disturbed by the proximity of danger and even death, but of a well considered and careful study.

The expression that Christ went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, seems to signify His followers in general.

Chap. xviii, verse 1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered. and his disciples.*

Judas having left them, the word "disciples" cannot be assumed to apply to any special number, say twelve, because if so the narrative would have said "with the remainder of His disciples" or "with His disciples except one." This suggestion may be weak, but it helps to support our argument that no special twelve existed.

The prophecy of the Old Testament which is referred to :

Chap. xviii, verse 9. *That the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

is a remarkable contradiction of fact, for at least one of them, Judas, was lost.

We cannot omit to admire the wonderful skill of Peter

in cutting off the ear of one of the high priest's servants, whose name, as John is careful to state, was Malchus.

Chap. xviii, verse 10. *Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.*

This could scarcely have been a skilled performance, however, for it was dark, and most likely it was an accident. Perhaps it is a mere observation on the part of John, to show more clearly Peter's heroic attitude on the occasion. We cannot wonder that the soldiers were startled, when, in reply to their challenge Jesus calmly answered, "I am He," for they probably expected armed resistance from His enthusiastic followers, and in consequence were themselves armed. Whether they actually fell to the ground at the sound of Christ's voice, however, is another matter. We must remember that it is John who reports it after this fashion, and that it was very dark at the time.

Chap. xviii, verse 5. *They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.*

6. *As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground.*

Except this little accident, or exaggeration, nothing remarkable is reported by John as having occurred. He may assume that the apprehension of Christ happened in much the same way as he describes it, as John without doubt was a witness of that occurrence. In consideration of this fact we must consider it striking that John does not mention the least about the temptations and prayers of Christ. Most probably he did not know anything about this.

We may well imagine that the disciples were scared, and that Peter, who had sworn that he would never leave Christ, followed Him at a distance. Somebody known to Peter then procured him admission into the palace of the high priest, and as a quiet spectator he witnessed some of the proceedings.

Chap. xviii, verse 15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus*

and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

By his manner he probably made himself an object of suspicion, and was therefore frequently interrogated in regard to his relation to Christ, and that, for fear of the excited crowd, he denied of all knowledge of Him.

Chap. xviii, verse 17. *Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.*

Peter was conscious of the cowardice and bad faith thus manifested, and when he met Christ's look, it seemed reproachful, and reminded him of all the sincere promises he had made never to leave or forswear Christ. It was early in the morning, and as he went out, being troubled in mind, the cock crew. This excited his attention at the time, and was ever afterward inseparable in his memory from this sad event.

The trial of Christ is an exciting and interesting description. There is little doubt that the account of these proceedings is in the main correct, for as they were matters of public record, it would be dangerous to misrepresent them. Christ being secured was first brought to Annas; who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest.

Chap. xviii, verse 13. *And led Him away to Annas first: for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.*

A preliminary examination was there instituted, to consider what charge, if any, should be brought against Him. Then He was sent to Caiaphas, where the examination was continued.

Chap. xviii, verse 19. *The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine.*

When Christ was examined by Caiaphas, His conduct was probably reserved. He behaved with dignity, and relied upon His relation with His imaginary God and father. Not answering the questions of the high priest properly, he

was simply struck in the face of this contempt for court.

Chap. xviii, verse 22. *And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest Thou the high priest so?*

Christ was then led to the tribunal.

Chap. xviii, verse 28. *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover.*

Pilate, however, could not find that any wrong had been done by Him.

Verse 29. *Pilate went out unto them, and said What accusation bring you against this man?*

He therefore preferred for the Jews to fight out their quarrels themselves, and to be free himself from any responsibility in these matters.

Chap. xviii, verse 31. *Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.*

The Jews would not consent to judge Him themselves, because by their own laws, they could not accomplish their aim of killing Him. They therefore brought more serious charges against Christ: what they are is not mentioned. In all probability He is accused of treason against the dominion of the Roman Empire, and upon this charge, Pilate could not avoid examining Christ.

Chap. xviii, verse 33. *Then Pilate entered into into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said un'o him, Art Thou the King of the Jews?*

Christ assents to this accusation, but proceeds to explain the signification of His kingdom.

Chap. xviii, verse 36. *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence.*

Then Pilate perceives that the man is nothing more than

a religious fanatic, and sees no cause to punish Him.

Chap. xviii, verse 38. *Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.*

The Jews not being satisfied with this, Pilate takes to another expedient, leaving the Jews to chose, according to custom at the passover, what malefactor shall be released, believing that they will certainly prefer to release Jesus, whose offence is so light. But the hate and fury of the Jews was too intense for them to be rational, and rather than have Christ released they asked for a notorious robber to be pardoned.

Chap. xviii, verse 40. *Then cried they all again, saying Not this man but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*

Pilate, probably as a last attempt to appease the Jews, had Christ scourged on the ground of His having assumed the title King of the Jews.

Chap. xix, verse 1. *Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.*

And with the idea of ridiculing the whole matter he had Christ dressed up in kingly garments, and a crown of thorns put on His head.

Chap. xix, verse 5. *Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto them, Behold the man.*

This excited the Jews still more, and they frantically cried out for His crucifixion.

Chap. xix, verse 6. *When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.*

Pilate hesitates, and feeling assured in his own mind that Jesus had violated no law, he enquires as whether the man may not come under the jurisdiction of some other ruler.

Chap. xix, verse 9. *And went again unto the judgment*

hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

The Jews owing this hesitancy became even more clamorous for Christ's death. They even threatened Pilate with the wrath of Cæsar if he did not accede to their wishes. Chap. xix, verse 12. "*And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him. But the Jews cried out saying, If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.*" Pilate at length had to give way to their clamors. Chap. xix, verse 15. "*But they cried out, Away with Him! away with Him! Crucify Him! Pilate said unto them: Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar. (16.) Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified, and they took Jesus and led Him away.*"

The whole gives vivid evidence of the tremendous excitement this occurrence had created among the Jews. It can be seen all through, however, that the principal opponents of Christ were the priests, who dreaded the influence gained by this eccentric religious reformer. We may consider this lively description of the proceedings against Christ to be the most credible part of John's testimony. No extraordinary performances are narrated, probably because the whole proceedings were witnessed by thousands and were well remembered.

We observe that the trial of Christ commenced on Friday morning, the day before the Passover; and that the Jews did not enter the Roman judgment hall for fear of being defiled.

Pilate had to examine Christ upon the charges brought against Him by the Jews, while the Jews, for the reason mentioned, did not put in an appearance. He therefore had Christ brought out on the pavement, face to face with his accusers.

Chap. xix, verse 13. *When Pilate therefore heard that saying he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judg-*

ment seat, in a place that is called the pavement, but in the Hebrew Gabbatha.

These proceedings, therefore, were witnessed perhaps by many of the adherents of Christ, and even by John himself.

Christ is then led to a place called Golgotha and crucified between two malefactors, over his head being nailed the title to which He was alleged to have laid claim.

Chap. xix, verse 19. *And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

This was no doubt placed there by Pilate as a justification of the condemnation to which he had been forced. He had the document written in several languages, so that all strangers in Jerusalem might read it, and it might prevent any rumors to the effect that the sentence was not a just one.

John has but little more to mention in respect to the last moments of Christ. He states that the mother of Christ was specially given into his care, but her name is afterward never mentioned, which circumstance, considering the important testimony she was able to give in regard to Christ, is rather singular.

Chap. xix, verse 25. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

26. *"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother—Woman, behold thy Son! 27. Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy Mother; and from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."*

This, according to John, was all Christ had to say when He departed, which is certainly very little considering the alleged important mission He was about to conclude. Possibly He had thought up to the last moment that He should escape in some miraculous manner. He found that His trust in God was of no avail, that He had to succumb to

human judgment, that His imagined divine character was vain, and therefore He was silent. He suffered the pangs of torture like other mortals, and also thirsted.

Chap. xix, verse 28. *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.*

29. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.*

How John became aware that Christ knew "all the things were now accomplished," is another little instance of John's omniscience.

Chap. xix, verse 30. *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar He said it is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the Ghost.*

The death occurred according to the laws of nature.

The division of Christ's garments may have been in accordance with custom, and there is nothing in the circumstance to be considered except its reference to the Old Scripture. Chap. xix, verse 24. *"They said therefore amongst themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith: They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."* This is really mentioned at Psalms, Chap. xx, verse 13. *"They parted my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture."* This, however, is not intended as a prophecy, and can in no way be regarded as one. It alludes only to David himself, and in connection with it, there are various other tribulations mentioned which did not happen to Christ; so that if prophecy it was, but a small portion of it was fulfilled. But how came the soldiers to adopt this plan of dividing the garments "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled?"

They were Romans, not Jews, and one can hardly believe that outsiders had so thorough an acquaintance with the Jewish Scriptures. In all probability this is one of those cases where a great effort has been made to find, in regard

to an incident in Christ's life, something like a coincidence in the Old Scripture. In every case where this has succeeded the latter is cited as a prophecy.

We may well suppose that there were many who did not believe in the guilt of Christ, especially the non-concerned, the soldiers, the Greeks, and the Romans, and that therefore the soldiers, out of respect to this innocent sufferer, did not break His legs, as it was customary to do, but pierced His side with a spear to put an end to His agonies.

Chap. xix, verse 33. *But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already they brake not His legs:*

34. *But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.*

This is all John knows and reveals about the passion of Christ, and in the main it is so plain and reasonably stated that we have no ground for disbelieving it, especially after such sincere expressions as these, which however, has evidently reference to the later occurrences only.

Chap. xix, verse 35. *And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.*

However, where he refers to the Old Scriptures again—

Chap. xix, verse 36. *For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.*

37. *And again another scripture saith. They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*

and which may be found corresponding to some extent with Exodus, Chap. xii, verse 46. *In one house shall it be eaten: thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*

Zachariah, Chap. xii, verse 10. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be*

in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.

This can hardly be interpreted as having any reference to Christ, because it distinctly alludes to entirely different objects and circumstances.

Then Christ is taken from the cross by some special friends, and the body is embalmed and wrapped in linen, according to the Jewish custom, and laid in a new sepulchre. The first day of the week, Mary Magdalen goes early in the morning alone to the grave, probably to mourn there over her beloved master.

Chap. xx, verse 1. *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.*

This first day of the week is with us now the Sabbath. Friday evening Christ was laid in the sepulchre; on Sunday morning it was found that the body had disappeared. It had been in the sepulchre not three days, as stated, but two nights and one day. Mary finds the stone taken away from the grave and the sepulchre empty. She returns and reports this to Peter, and to the apostle "whom Jesus loved," which no doubt means John.

Chap. xx, verse 2. *Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre and we know not where they have laid him.*

Both Peter and John go to the grave to convince themselves of the truth of this statement, and a detailed account is given of what they saw at the sepulchre.

Chap. xx, verse 3. *Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.*

4. *So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.*

5. *And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.*

6. *Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the*

napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

8. *Then went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.*

9. *For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.*

10. *Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.*

This seems to be a plain and credible account of what occurred when it was discovered that Christ's body had disappeared from the grave. They had no idea as yet that Christ would rise from the grave, and John represents the occurrences from this standpoint. They had seen nothing but an empty grave; the body was gone, but the grave-clothes were left behind. Where the corpse had gone to, they had no idea, but they began to call to mind various expressions of Christ in regard to "the resurrection," and from this formed the theory that in Christ's case a real resurrection had taken place. This was rumored abroad, growing more plausible as the story was repeated, until at length it was to the effect that not only had Christ arisen, but He had been seen of His disciples.

Now, Peter and John, after examining the grave, returned home, having noticed nothing out of the common. Mary, apparently, returned to the grave, for no apparent purpose, and then notices the angels there, who also spoke to her.

Chap. xx, verse 11. *But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre.*

12. *And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.*

How natural this occurrence may have happened, the course of the narrative here indicates a remarkable deficiency. First it is stated that Mary Magdalene returned home from the grave, and informs Peter of the disappearance of Christ. He and "the disciple whom Jesus loves," go to the

grave, to convince themselves of the truth, and return home as stated.

Verse 10. *Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.*

The next verse at once brings us again to face with Mary at the grave. Chap. xx, verse 11. "*But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping.*" This evidently is a distortion of the account of the proceedings, since Peter and John do not mention Mary's presence, and would scarcely have left her alone. She may have returned but this is suggestion only. It is singular, however, that up to Chap. xx, verse 10, where John evidently reveals from personal experience, nothing uncommon happens. From verse 11 however, where Mary unexpectedly occurs, the mystery again takes its course and continues to the end. May we not suggest that from the latter point John again reports from tradition, which was clumsily connected with the point where his own experience stopped.

Mary is also reported as being the first to whom the resurrected Christ shows Himself. She met some unknown man whom she supposed at the time to be the gardener, and questions him about the disappearance of the body. He makes some equivocal and mysterious replies, and Mary passes on her way. Afterwards when the rumor of Christ's resurrection had swollen to a real bodily reappearance she recalls this scene with the gardener, and readily fancies that it was Christ who had appeared to her in that shape.

Chap. xx, verse 15. *Jesus said unto her, Woman why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*

Possibly, however, the whole story is a fabrication to confirm the theory that Christ had arisen, and to confute, on the other hand, the rumors that the body had been stolen from the grave. The words the newly arisen Jesus addresses to Mary are mysterious in their import.

Chap. xx, verse 17. *Jesus saith unto her, touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and unto my God and your God.*

So Christ had first to ascend to heaven before He could allow anyone to touch Him ; after this journey He was in a fit state to be handled.

Chap. xx, verse 27. *Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side : and be not faithless, but believing.*

The appearances of Christ after death do not appear to have any special object beyond that of inducing the disciples to believe in his bodily resurrection.

Chap. xx, verse 19. *Then the same day, at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and said unto them, Peace be unto you."*

Very little has He to say to them. He distributes the Holy Ghost in a singular way, and disappears.

Chap. xx, verse 22. *And when he had said this he breathed on them and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins, ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained."* And again :

Chap. xx, verse 24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus come, the other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. (25.) But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

26. *And after eight days, again his disciples were within and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*

This is the whole and sole object of Christ's reappearance. Thomas, who, as it is supposed, was nearly always with Christ, and witnessed most of the miracles He had

done, expressed firmly his determination not to believe what his brethren in faith had told him, except he was convinced by his own observation. Christ submits to this distrust of Thomas, and for the sake of convincing him He appears again on earth, and grants every point of his demand, so that he may believe. And yet it is now expected from us that we should believe the same thing, albeit we have seen nothing, and have no other proof except the testimony of this little book. The disbelief of Thomas was forgiven, although he knew and had lived with Christ; while we are kept in uncertainty, having nothing to vouch for the truth.

A careful reading of John's gospel, therefore, leaves the impression that the history of the Passion, is based on John's own experience, while the resurrection and reappearance is fable, or the report of stories which had been created by the rumor of Christ's resurrection. Even where he refers to the twelve who have seen Christ

Chap. xx, verse 24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

we could not consider it reliable, for the simple reason, as suggested before, that this oft-mentioned number of disciples was purely imaginary. Supposing there really had been twelve specially appointed disciples there could not have been more than eleven at this time, because Judas had left their ranks.

That John had heard of many more fables that he did not think important enough to record we may be thoroughly convinced.

Chap. xx, verse 30. *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book.*

He then concludes, in the next verse :

But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

After this, however, he remembers another little story which he thinks is important enough to be recorded :

Chap. xxi, verse 3. *Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.*

A similar fable is mentioned by Luke, but it differs from this in all essential points. No doubt it is the same story, however, and has only undergone those mysterious changes which happen to every common rumor. Matthew and Mark only mention that Peter and Andrew, his brother, were casting their nets into the sea, as they were fishermen, and that they were called from this occupation to become disciples. John probably forgot this point when writing his gospel, and so, in order to bring it in at the end he creates another reappearance of Christ. This suggestion has weight in the fact that although the other apostles mention this fishing excursion of Simon Peter, none of them give it any connection with the reappearance of Christ.

Chap. xxi, verse 4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*

5. *Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him No.*

And now with regard to the miracle itself.

Chap. xxi, verse 6. *And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore; and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*

We must wonder that these fishers, having toiled hard all night without avail, should recommence their weary labors at the suggestion of a stranger, and a man who, from His dress and appearance, could have little knowledge of their craft. For none of them knew that the stranger was Christ. John to lend an air of fact to the miracle, states the exact number of fishes that were caught by following the stranger's suggestion.

Chap. xxi, verse 11. *Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty*

three: and for all there was so many, yet was not the net broken.

To further illustrate the miracle, attention is particularly drawn to the fact that this very large draft of fishes did not break the nets. It is easy to be seen that this story has received several additions from the fanciful imagination of John himself.

The conversation between Christ and Peter is also imaginary, and no doubt has its foundation in the story of Peter denying Christ during the latter's trial.

John often takes the precaution of mentioning the names of the disciple present at the various occurrences he describes. He does so in this case.

Chap. xxi, verse 2. *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.*

In some instances he is careful to indicate his own presence, but in an indirect manner. In this case he says simply, "And two other of the disciples," a few verses further on it is "that disciple whom Jesus loved," so that there may be no possibly be a doubt as to the identity of one of the two other disciples, without however, committing himself.

Chap. xxi, verse 7. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loveth said unto Peter, This the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he gird his fisher's coat unto him for he was naked, and did cast himself into the sea.*

All this is introduced for no other purpose than to support John's own dignity, and to show the prominent place he occupies among Christ's followers. There is further confirmation of this view.

Chap. xxi, verse 22. *Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.*

22. *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*

John had most probable, at the time he wrote this, attained a good age, and believing that the end of the world was near at hand, fancied that Christ would return to judge the world before his (John's) death.

It was to bring in this story that Peter's name is so prominently mentioned giving him some credit also, otherwise we doubtless should have heard only "of the disciple whom Jesus loveth," a phrase which occurs so often in this gospel.

Chap. xxi, verse 20. *Then Peter turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loveth, following, which also leaned on his breast at supper and said—Lord which is he that betrayeth Thee?*

It was this "beloveth disciple" who wrote this gospel: he is next very careful to inform us.

Chap. xxi, verse 24. *This is the disciple which testified of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.*

Finally, John mentions once more that Christ had done many other things—probably meaning miracles—and their number was so great that it was impossible to record them.

Chap. xxi, verse 25. *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

With this wonderful remark John closes his testimony. He fails to record the last and one of the most wonderful acts of Christ, testified to by the other apostles—that of Christ's ascent into heaven—he probably never heard of it.

The final scene of the history of Christ, upon which His divine character is chiefly founded, must be considered as the most prominent act of any of those reported. John could not have omitted this if it had really happened. He could have been absent, but could never have been left unconscious of it, and could never have neglected to report it. However, this miracle which Matthews did not dare to record, and Mark only slightly hints at, was a consequence of the fable of the resurrection of Christ.

REVELATIONS.

BY JOHN.

We observe at once, in our perusal of this book, the same lofty style and visionary expressions to which we have become familiar with, in John's writings. The revelations have generally been considered testimony of great value, written by the direct inspiration of God, but which the simple human mind is not able to conceive. It shows, however, a want of sound judgment to concede that that which we cannot understand, is therefore of a superior knowledge or excellence. It is for the thinking man not to concede all that is suggested to him, but to examine the facts presented, trace them to their source, and himself to judge from these facts and the circumstances connected therewith, how far the inferences drawn from them coincide with his own deliberate opinion, and are of any value to himself. The most valuable representations must undoubtedly be those which are perfectly clear and comprehensible to those to whom they are addressed, and nothing can be of value, not even the testimony of a God, if we are unable to understand it. To attach a higher value to the Revelations because they are unintelligible, is therefore the height of absurdity.

The very first statement he makes is open to objection, except by those who believe John was divinely inspired. To such we refer our demonstrations of his constant contradictions and inconsistencies of statement. He says in his first verse, by way of preface:

1. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass ; and he said and signified it by his angel unto his servant John :*

2. *Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

John was evidently of opinion that the judgment of the world was soon to come to pass, and that all creation, as stated further on, would fare badly. Herein, as time has proved, he was sorely mistaken. This revelation, he says, was sent to him by an angel, and yet he immediately after states that he actually saw and heard these things.

Chap. i, verse 10. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.*

11. *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega for the first and the last ; and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia ; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

This spirit—as all spirits mentioned in the Bible are represented to be, not excepting the spirit of the Most High—is a partial and sectarian spirit. He recommends John to send this revelation to the seven churches only whose names are given. This would seem to argue that the spirit's knowledge of the churches of earth was just as extensive and interesting, and not more so, than that of John. These churches, as no others that we know of, had special angel guardians, and to these John was commanded to write.

Chap. ii, verse 1. *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write.* Chap. ii, verse 8. *And unto the angel of the church of Smyrna write, etc.*

Then the wonderful description which John gives.

Chap. i, verse 16. *And he had in his right hand seven stars ; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword ; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

And then the wonderful effect it had upon the writer himself.

17. *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

All this points to the probability, that John was suffering from religious exultation, and reavealed his sensations and visions. This is proved by his own statement.

Chap. i, verse 10. *I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.*

This was the voice, as he supposed, of Christ, and yet he describes Him as being the holder of the keys of hell.

Chap. i, verse 18. *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

This is not all a loving spirit, but on the contrary, a very spiteful one, especially toward those sects which had not embraced Christianity to the full, or professed other doctrines.

Chap. ii, verse 6. *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.*

Chap. ii, verse 14. *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Blaalam who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

15. *So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.*

Chap. ii, verse 20. *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou suffered that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

21. *And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*

22. *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.*

23. *And I will kill her children with death.*

This description of the special predictions of a heavenly

spirit, and the special things he takes delight in, is much more applicable to the spirits from the opposite region. Had not a "divinely-inspired" disciple written it, it might have been accepted as a good pen-picture of a fiend incarnate. Fancy a divine spirit exulting over the awful fate of an erring human being!

When John had finished his exhortations to the seven churches he again relapses into the ecstasy of mind which he calls "being in the spirit."

Chap. iv, verse 2. *And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.*

He then sees all manner of strange sights, one vision crowding into another. This, he describes in the most exciting manner. They prove that John's fanaticisms had brought him to the same mental stage as it does a large contingent of the inmates of our insane asylum at the present day. These Revelations, written in the craziest possible manner, are the emanations of a crazy brain—a religious maniac.

SUMMARY.

The whole of the foregoing evidence, adorned by these so-called inspired writers, it will be seen, fails to bear out the popular idea that the founder of Christianity was in any sense a divinity. Only few of the reports have any direct reference to Him, while the majority of the religious teachings and statements attributed to Him in fact resulted from the combined efforts of some of His followers of a later date, who never saw Him, and must therefore have compiled their accounts upon legends and traditions more or less unreliable.

The only accounts to which some reliance may be attached for the reason that the writers were contemporaries and followers of Christ, are those of Peter, James, Jude and John. The three first named give not the slightest indication of Christ having possessed any supernatural character; while John, who became a convert only during the last days of Jesus, is too much of a fanatic to inspire us with any respect for his reliability. He reports not only what he saw, but, in his zeal forgetting discretion, reproduces all the wonderful stories about Christ that emanated from and were kept in circulation by the ignorant and superstitious, and which, as other writers show, had no real foundation. Paul, who was as much a fanatic in some respects, as John himself, mentions none of the extraordinary circumstances connected with Christ's life to which John refers so often, and if they were generally accepted as facts during his time, he would most likely have done so. The pupils of Paul—Matthew, Mark and Luke—who, as the evidence clearly shows, acted in concert, do refer to them, although earnestly warned by Paul of the danger attaching the circulation of

such 'old wives' tales." It was many years after the death of Christ before these stories came to their knowledge, and then, having no means of verifying or substantiating them, they had no right to publish them as facts.

We may believe that Jesus was a man of superior intelligence; an eccentric reformer and scrupulous defender of His sincere convictions, for which cause he sacrificed His life. The manner of His death confirmed the assumption in regard to His divine mission, while the mysterious disappearance of His body from the grave—resulted in shrouding the whole in a mystery, and caused the adoption of the theory of resurrection, advocated by Christ himself, but figurative.

The doctrines of the New Testament, if followed out in their entirety, would have produced a demoralizing rather than a beneficial effect upon humanity. Common sense, however, has stepped in, and while the utterly absurd and unfeasible were gradually yet deliberately ignored, those only were adopted which seemed applicable to our human institutions. Yet we can have no doubt that many of these doctrines were the cause of much demoralization in former generations, and, to some extent, at the present time. One of these demoralizing doctrines, which still retains a foothold only because it is profitable, is that of the absolution of sin. The easy reconciliation for any perpetrated crime, through absolution, must cause a disregard of sin, although it may be argued that the absolution is invalid unless sought from a motive of true penitence. This proves that not absolution but penitence and reform is the question, and where this reaction does not take place, absolution is in vain. Nevertheless, absolution is a consoler for temporary remorse, which loses its effect, however, as easily as it is obtained. The practice of it causes the delusion that all evil deeds are straightened if the required penalty in prayers or money has been paid. Absolution has thus become to many a matter of business and petty consideration only, instead of producing a real beneficial result. When, however, absolution does not exist, and in hours of meditation the mind feels burdened

with the heavy charges of conscience and no relief can be obtained, except through genuine reformation, conversion then will be more sincere and more durable than any absolution can effect; and if real reformation is attested by improved mind and conduct the past will go into oblivion and no merciful God will criminate such ardent penitent.

ERRONEOUS THEORY OF THE DEITY.

A great and sublime idea of the Deity is conveyed in the Christian Gospel, in which He is represented as a loving, merciful and almighty father, who loves His children "which are men" dearly; and for whom He has prepared a heaven, where they will be received in glory after having lived a thoroughly religious life in strict obedience of the commandments submitted to them by His prophets. This Deity is supposed to guide all our ways and doings to our own good; and even if we are adverse and oppose His providence He has left a way open by which the stubborn may share His mercy, namely by repenting and acknowledging His son Jesus Christ, whom He sent to take all the sins of mankind upon Himself and by death to expiate them.

This idea brings the image of an infinite good God so near to us that we may almost converse with Him; He becomes a companion and consoler to us whenever we may happen to need support. However sublime this idea may appear to us, it leaves a great question open to consideration, which, if we accept this theory unconditionally, exposes this sublime ruler to undeniable injustice. All humanity being His children, all must be equally dear to Him, and have all an equal claim to His mercy, and be entitled to the same facilities for gaining His glorious heaven at last. This theory, however, only grants the favor to recognize this God and His son Jesus Christ in the particular form which the Scripture stipulates, to only a small part of His children; the heathen, or those who do not recognize this God in this particular form, are damned. They are endowed with equal mental and physical faculties, and most of them acknowledge a Deity, whom they worship and adore and sometimes undergo great sufferings

for. It simply comes to this, that according to the Christian idea they are mistaken in their Deity.

Frequently these heathen are far superior in character and habit than those who call themselves the favored ones of God, nevertheless, since the opportunity has not been afforded them of becoming familiar with our Scriptures, they are consigned to eternal damnation. Much less could they be aware that a son of this God ever existed, whose adoration is essential to salvation.

This theory, even the most prejudiced advocate of Christianity will admit, is rather confused. It is impossible to conceive that a just, all-good and merciful God would mercilessly condemn those to eternal damnation. He failed or had neglected to make familiar with His real name and character. This difficulty is attempted to be surmounted by the theory that the circumstances surrounding a man's life will be taken into consideration at the judgment, and forbearance shown to those heathen who never had the chance to inform themselves of the Christian God, and that perhaps a reconciliation may then be effected. If such suggestions should prove to be correct, why should not the same principle apply to doubting Christians? And for what purpose did Christ appear, if a conversion after death was possible.

If we acknowledge an invariably just Creator, we must consider Him just in all His ways; but the distinct forms of the original Christian doctrines do not admit of this; and since its theories in this regard are arbitrary and contradictory, and incompatible with the idea of an all just and infallible God its doctrines must be erroneous.

Neither can the theory of His invariably guiding our ways and the predestination of our fate be maintained in face of the alleged.

If all our ways and doings are ordered by Him, we are involuntary tools of His will and whim, and cannot be held answerable for the result of our lives in any way. How could a just God award eternal sufferings and damnation for perpetrated evil and crime which He had Himself dictated?

And when good works are done under compulsion what merit in them is there that calls for reward? While the merits of those who are saved for heaven would go for naught, those who would be consigned to hell would be justified in accusing this alleged infallible God of cruelty, partiality and injustice.

It may be suggested that God, after all, is perfectly just, but that our limited conception is unable to understand His ways but such reasoning only proves our utter ignorance of the divine ways, and, being ignorant of this most prominent principle, we may as well admit that we are entirely ignorant of Him and of the future.

These theories of the Deity existed long before Christ, having originated in the darkest days of ignorance and superstition. Even Jesus Christ knew no better, and His acknowledgment of them is incorporated with His own record.

ERRONEOUS THEORY OF HEAVEN.

The Biblical description of a heaven, where God rules seated on a throne, surrounded by angels and saints, and judging the good and the bad, is a vague human explanation of what is to come hereafter. Leaving out of consideration the vague direction in which this heaven may be located, with its throne of gold or silver, it is incompatible with the character of a divine Providence that the fate of its subjects, for a lasting eternity, should be dependent on their behavior during their short existence on this globe, where their course is a mere change and subject to uncontrollable contingencies. Many expire who never even become conscious of what is good or evil, and how could they enjoy the reward of any merits? The actions of men are governed by circumstances, and while some have hardly any cares, and no cause for transgressing either natural or human laws, others are driven by circumstances to the most desperate deeds; nevertheless the result of such circumstances decides his fate for eternity. This is contrary to any theory of an all-just and bounteous Providence, and therefore heaven cannot be of this character, as represented in the Scriptures.

Can even eternity be an aimless existence for eternal joy or torture?

In heaven it is said that the spirits are graded according to their merits while on this globe; is this consistent with universal equality? And is such an existence as they are described as leading there in accordance with creation's law of continual activity and progress? Such theories may be good enough for short-sighted and ignorant people, but can hardly satisfy the intelligent and considered class of our present century.

ERRONEOUS THEORY OF THE DEVIL.

The theory of the devil in all the different characters he is represented in the bible is supremely ridiculous in its nature, and utterly inconsistent with the doctrines of an all-mighty, omniscient, merciful and infallible God. The God who according to the Scriptures, had made everything perfect, could not have created or permitted the existence of a race of demons whose only object would be to travesty his divine will and purpose. Since all evil is attributed to the works and influence of the devil, no temptation would ever exist if these evil demons were not allowed by Him to exercise such power. All humanity would have been strictly faultless here, and have an undisputed title to heaven hereafter. Nevertheless these devils are permitted to continue their mischief, and to alienate many of this God's beloved children from Him and lead them to eternal damnation.

This God would not be good, just and merciful if He suffered this to continue when it is in His power to stop it. However, if He has no power over this devil, then we have to recognize an independent evil god, and might just as well adopt the Persian or any other heathen mythology which represents the gods of good and evil continually contesting each other's purpose, poor humanity being the apple of discord between them.

Neither is the theory of the devil consistent with the doctrine of predestination, and the invariable direction of men's ways by God. If the Creator predestines the fate of His subjects, and guides all their ways, He surely would not lead a portion of his beloved children into the clutches of His most hated foe? The power and authority of this God, it would seem, are restricted; over the devil He has not gained

supremacy. All the evil of the world is the devil's work; and it could not have been accomplished had the higher spirit power to object.

The impossibility of this theory is not difficult to prove, and it must rather be wondered at, how poor humanity for such a long period has been able to maintain the theory of an allmighty, infallible, just, merciful Creator in conjunction with the existence of a devil, who exercises an independent power of his own to thwart nearly the whole of this God's purpose. The theory, however, is not a Christian one, but originated from the old Scriptures. Curiously enough, it is not spoken of in the beginning of the Jewish traditions, but only after their return from captivity in Babylon, and, as has been before stated, it bears a strong resemblance to a doctrine embodied in the Persian mythology. This suggests that the theory of an existing devil and evil spirits was adopted by the Jews from the Persians during their captivity.

It has been maintained ever since, but lately we hear less of his satanic godship. He appears to have relaxed his bold proceedings, perhaps because he finds himself unable to cope with the progress of enlightenment and civilization.

ERRONEOUS THEORIES OF HELL.

The Christian representation of hell is just as absurd as any of the former theories, and being entirely inconsistent with the theory of a just, merciful and infallible Creator, must be a most unjust and merciless institution. The Creator, who according to the Scriptures, made all things, must also have created hell, a place of torture for those who by his own directions are destined to suffer there for eternity, whether they deserve it or not. Since men originated under various circumstances, and are of different character and nature, their inclination to submit to the various temptations that surrounds them, originates with their innate dispositions and propensities. Since, however, the explanations of what is sin are so many and varied, it is difficult to designate what may or may not be within its limits. The Christian Doctrine maintains that all humanity are sinners, not by their actions only but by nature; and that only the submission to Jesus Christ exclusively saves them from eternal damnation. Consequently the vast number of people who lived before him are all condemned to hell. This cannot be understood or explained otherwise, as it is so plainly stated. Hell, therefore, must have been of superior consideration in the creation from the beginning, and the doctrine how to avoid this hell even malicious in construction.

While, the doctrine as it is conspicuously stated, that "Blessed are they that mourn," most surely must allude to those who have something they can mourn for, or repent of evil done, they have first to commit some wrong before they can repent, and according to this bible teaching these sinners would be the most favored people in heaven. Even great evil-doers, who out of fear for what may happen to them

hereafter, may sincerely repent and in humble submission surrender to the doctrines of Jesus Christ, and they would consequently be saved from eternal damnation and be gloriously received in heaven; while others who lived a most conscientious and just life, but departed suddenly without having any chance to reconsider any of their former mistakes, would go to hell and suffer there for an eternity. It would be no harm of course to recognize these questionable doctrines of Christ, and peacefully submit to them, however, if righteousness must be considered a high virtue it must be conceded also that it is hypocrisy and sin as well to submit to any doctrine which does not appear to be sensible and just—but is even revolting—to a conscientious mind.

This question of future judgment, it may be suggested is out of the reach of our criticism, and that it must be left to the discretion of the all-wise judgement of God himself. However, since such reasoning must prove our utter ignorance about the future, all other prophecies and calculations to this effect must be considered frail suggestions only, for which even the slightest vindications are wanting.

While the so-called prophets of former times, who are alleged to have been informed by divine inspiration, only treat of the torments of hell, but fail to throw any light upon these critical questions, the defects in their prophecies must be convincing proof that they did not know more about the future after death than we know now. Regardless of this prophetic information about this future hell, all statements in regard to it differ. At some places in the bible it is represented as a furnace with a terrible hot fire raging, and closed with iron gates; at others a place of darkness, where "there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth," and we also read of condemned spirits being allowed to leave it, to wander on this earth and seduce the righteous into wickedness.

Regardless of the fact that science has penetrated this universe for millions of miles, and no such place of torture has yet been discovered, its locality must be considered to

be too vague to call for further comment. It may be said that it is mentioned symbolically only, but then this statement proves to be a deception, and we may at once declare that we can have no trust in any prophecies of former times. We may rather suggest that these theories and doctrines were promulgated by utterly ignorant and superstitious people, who compiled these accounts from legends and traditions which circulated at times when the condition of the earth was yet a mystery, and when all knowledg'd was founded on superstition only. When Jesus Christ lived no better theories were known, and they are adhered to and believed in by many even in our present day.

THE AUTHOR'S INTUITIONS.

When all doctrines and theories of an arbitrary supreme ruler, such as finds representation in the Scriptures, had become but a childish fable to me, and my mind wandered restless in an uncertainty, I could not remain unconscious of the magnitude of all creation and the marvellous system of the universe. An irresistible idea seized me that all this magnitude could not have originated and be controlled on its own behalf; but that a great original power must inspire this incessant moving and generating universe, directing its course to the furtherance of some eternal aim. Can we question the validity of such suggestion, when experience and science prove the incessant transformation and evolution not only of the things of earth but that in regard to celestial bodies also. All has a course to finish which ends in transformation. To each of the planets and the stars is an aim reserved, and every one maintains its assigned place and course until its final destiny is reached. Could all this be without an object, but be like child's play, only vain? How could we entertain the idea that all this greatness should be in vain, when even we insignificant creatures do not act and think without some prospective object? Should all creation, then, which inspires the whole and is so superior in construction, be itself without an aim? When on account of our limited conception we are not able to unriddle creation's destiny, yet we must concede that the whole is striving at some object. To us insignificant, though most important subjects on this globe, a final aim also has without doubt been reserved.

When I consider the mysteries of creation and its magnitude, I cannot think it was influenced only by such powers, as we are able to conceive or calculate of through science;

but that a number of powers and forces must exist which are not known and not perceptible to our limited mental capacity, but which in various forms and ways are active, and exercise immense influence on the whole system. The presence of some of these powers are known to us by their effect, as electricity, magnetism; attraction, cohesion, light, sound, heat, &c.. and the presence of other but unknown powers must be presumed from the wonderful results to be observed daily in the changes of nature, which, even with all our scientific knowledge, remain still mysteries to us. Scholars are able to explain the generation, combination and dissolution of matter, but the processes of nature leading to these results they are unable to explain.

However, there is nothing lost in the universe, neither substance, powers or atoms; and while substance is confined to space, powers and atoms traverse the whole universe to exercise their influence where their presence is required, and disperse again to find new employment when their duty is performed. While evolution shows its traces on all that is perceptible, and we presume that it extends its influence on the powers and atoms, its alliances, we may suggest that the improved condition of the latter rather inspires the evolution of matter. Science teaches us that all creation's subjects are contributory and dependent on each other. The multitude of stars, although all occupy a special course, each contributes its share to the balancing power of the whole system, while their light and influence prove the interchange of powers and atoms. The whole is one great system, and all that appertains especially to any one part, is none the less in accord with the whole.

Evolution inspires the whole, and while the developed course which our globe at present occupies has been preceded by some others, most probably the smaller ones, the remainder will succeed in due time, although their substance and condition may differ in various ways. The metamorphosis of matter could not be confined to substance only, but stipulates a change of its surrounding powers and atoms, which experience evolution in equal degree.

These powers and atones of the universe, whose influences are various, must be manifold, and while contrasting even in effect must, like substance, vary in character, and affect creation's subjects according to this character. The higher and more complicated powers of the universe are those inspiring vegetation and animal life, as well as the power of instinct and the senses. These are powers as well which assert their presence by their activity in combination with the substance; depart again, however, when its aliens do not maintain the conditions which are required to sustain its inspirations. The most accomplished of all powers of the universe which are known to us, are installed in man, creation's most perfect subject. He has the powers of senses and of conscience in a most perfect and united system. These, called the spirit of men, are inspired powers as well, and far superior to the body, which returns to dust, its original character, but the spirit, which experiences transformation only, lives forever, and returns to its original and kindred spirits, when its duty in creation's destiny has been performed. There it is renewed to perform again its duties in the eternal work of evolution: the strife for perfection, and the aspiration to draw nearer to the sublime and infallible original power which inspires the whole universe. Nevertheless this supreme power could not be perfect in the sense as we understand it, as it would have created everything perfect, according to its own image; progress would be impossible. However inexplicable its nature is, its aim is endless perfection and ennobleness of the spirit, to which all powers are contributory and Creation its means. The invariable duty of the spiritual power is the promotion of this inspiration, and to assist with all energy the accomplishment of this eternal aim; while its future delight will be, the consideration of its proficiency in which accomplishment it is efficient, and the reward a future higher position in creation's efficiency.

Our short sojourn on this globe is only a course of evolution of the spirit. A brave and sincere struggle through this life, in any form, develops the mind, and an honest vic-

tory over all temptations enobles it, which gentleness adds to its beauty. The conviction of performing our duty gives us strength and confidence, and with a pure consciousness of having acted in accordance with honest conviction, we may readily face whatever the future may have in store for us.

A wicked life and disgraceful deeds withdraw the mind from noble aspirations, and while retaliation for the transgressions of nature's laws generally overtake the transgressors after short delay, the greatest curse is the degradation in its glorious and eternal aim.

THE EVOLUTION OF LIFE.

Creation instituted various methods for the accomplishment of evolution. The most efficient method of promoting this aim is in the propagation of animal life, and essential in the construction and nature of humanity, its most perfect and accomplished subject, and which almost indicates a special direction of its providence. While propagation, in cause and effect, is of the same tenor, yet the results represent such actual contrasts that they hardly seem to be derived from the same original. We are called upon to admire creation's providence, in the singular diversity of character and construction of the two sexes, each of whom by contrivance being assigned their special duty and special influence in its own direction. The male sex, which by nature is the stronger and most energetic, is prominently adapted for struggle and toil, and to provide for all the necessities of life, and in this capacity represents the medium for muscular and spiritual development; while to the weaker, but more affectionate female sex the capacity and disposition is bestowed to rear and care and, with an innate loving and devotional spirit, inspire refinement and tender feelings, the agents of the ennoblement of mind. To woman, in this capacity, is assigned the most important charge to care and rear and guide her progeny from their earliest existence to manhood, and toward the course they are to occupy in their future life. As a plant requires the most tender care in its early growth for its healthy development, so are the cares bestowed on a child from its earliest days.

There is a saying "a good tree brings forth good fruit," but good seed, when planted on poor ground and badly cared for, degrades the plant; while poor seed on good ground, if

well cared for, will always improve the nature of the plant. The purity and good condition of the ground on which the plant shall grow, therefore, must always be of prominent consideration. The seed stipulates the character of the plant, while the generating power secreted in the surrounding ground inspires it with life and development. Therefore the ground, which exercises such important influence on the seed, should be justly cared for, according to the production we expect to derive therefrom.

Should not woman, then, to whom this most important agency of creation is assigned, and who proves to be worthy after all, not be honored and adored? While woman is burdened with the toilsome cares of home, to her should be granted unprejudiced right to perform her responsible and noble mission, and be a real and foremost guide toward creation's highest aim—to evolution and ennoblement. Upon woman rests the responsibility of the elevation or degradation of future generations.

Mens ingenua deo grata.

THE END.

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